



Fairford Flyer No. 87 July/August 2026



Membership

Membership fees are 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 160 paid up subscriptions as of 1 July.

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

There are no meetings in July and August.

17 September Anglo Saxon sites in the Cotswolds by Philip Brant Simmons, Collections Engagement Assistant at the Corinium Museum

15 October River Valleys of the Cotswolds by Alan Pilbeam

19 November Music in Fairford Church by John Read

There is no meeting in December.

Next year's programme is being arranged now; 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

August 8-10 FairFest Beer and Music Festival in the Walnut Tree Field

August 15-17 Fairford Steam Rally (no FHS presence)

June 6-7 Fairford Festival

Edwin Cuss and Syd Flatman ably manned the usual display of interesting photographs in the Heritage Room at the Community Centre along with an FHS Display with a good number of visitors. Syd also coped with the refreshments, and we are very grateful for the donations. The FHS display topics were 90 years of the Palmer Hall and the Retreat Asylum/Coln House School conversion to Fairford Green. The FHS also had a display at the Festival in the cricket field on the Saturday which was not quite as successful with very few visitors and a lot of rain and wind and on Saturday evening the tent was blown down. So, we had to give the Sunday a miss as we had no tent; we moved the display to the Community Centre which was much more comfortable! Thank you to all who visited. The P31 submarine 'HMS Pride of Fairford' was on display at the Royal British Legion tent during the festival celebrating 125 years of the Royal Navy Submarine Service.

FHS AGM 2025-6

A total of 42 members plus the Committee were present at the AGM which proceeded as normal. The Committee members were duly re-elected.

Chair's report 2025/2026

As we come to the end of yet another year in the life of the Fairford History Society I believe it is fair to say that it has been a good year. Our membership remains high with 160 paid-up subscriptions, only three less than last year.

Sadly, this year we have lost some of our long-standing members; namely our past Chairman Geoff Hawkes, Liz Hope and Martin Lee-Browne, all of whom will be greatly missed. Geoff's family donated much of his large collection of books to the FHS, and the sale of these books has enabled us to buy two new display boards. These boards are an improvement on the existing display boards and each come with a sturdy carrying case which will help when transporting the boards to other locations.

This year's nine meetings with their varied presentations by invited speakers and FHS members included such topics as the RMS Titanic, the Battle of Waterloo, misericords and pictures of old Fairford. We are particularly grateful to our Treasurer for persuading her sister to give a very interesting talk on the history of Packwood House at short notice due to the cancellation of one of our speakers. Secretary Alison put together a compilation of audio and film clips of some of Fairford's past events which entertained and informed the audience; this is something that may feature in the coming year's meeting programme. We have had an average attendance of 49.75 members at the meetings this year.

At the 2025 Fairford Festival our President put up his usual display of lovely old photographs showing aspects of Fairford's history and our Secretary also created a display relating to the Festival's theme for that year.

We continue to receive requests for information, usually from non-members, on various Fairford-related topics. These are answered by the Secretary using information held in the Archives and in our growing digital resources. We are always ready to accept donations of artefacts and documents that can be added to our collection in readiness for the day when somebody donates a building for the much-needed 'Fairford Museum'!

Our Treasurer Gill reports that our finances remain quite healthy with a surplus of income over expenditure so there is no need to increase the annual membership subscription. I think £5 a year is still very good value for money in a world where rising prices are very much the norm.

Our healthy financial position will allow us to print some new publications. Work has started on topics that were proposed last year, namely a history of the Fairford Cottage Hospital and a history of the non-conformist churches of Fairford. It is hoped that these two Occasional Papers will be finished in the not-too-distant future. We have produced another 11 Fairford Flyers this year containing a range of brief articles, snippets from old newspapers, reports on presentations and news of forthcoming events.

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. We are very grateful to Nick Humphris who had donated a laptop which has a large amount of digital memory and will be used in the FHS Archive Room to enhance the collection and storage of historical information. 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 which is very much appreciated.

June Meeting – Gloucestershire Follies by Jonathan Holt

Did you know there is a 'Folly Fellowship'? You can find out more at www.follies.org.uk. Our speaker Jonathan Holt is a Trustee of the Fellowship and also editor of 'Follies: the international magazine'; Jonathan brought an issue of this interesting fully coloured item and samples of his books on Follies in Wiltshire, Dorset and Gloucestershire (available from Amazon). One definition of a folly is 'an ornament for a gentleman's garden and a 'mirror of his mind'. They seem to date mainly from the 18th century when it became the fashion to build a folly, but Jonathan showed us 20th and 21st century examples as well. Very early examples were the East and West Banqueting houses at Chipping Campden c.1620 which were designed by Sir Baptist Hicks who having dined with his guests at the main house (destroyed in the Civil War) took them to eat their desserts or sweetmeats in his banqueting houses. 18th century examples were Alfred's Hall, Cirencester Park seen in its former glory but now in scaffolding, the Hermit's cell at Badminton and the lovely examples at Painswick

Rococo Garden. 19th century examples were at Stancombe House and a curious spire and apple store with icehouse beneath in the orchard of Hambrook House near Winterbourne erected by the Reverend John Pring after the spire of the church was considered unsafe and taken down and re-erected in his garden in 1853.

Fairford Park Orangery – picturesque, dilapidated and a reincarnation!

1. Fairford Park Orangery c.1905: 2. Fairford Park Orangery c.1915 with David Niven b.1910 in the foreground. He was godson of Colonel Palmer the tenant of Fairford Park house from 1901 to 1940.



- 3, Fairford Park Orangery 1950s – looking very dilapidated: 4. Fairford Park Orangery was moved to Sledmere House, N Yorkshire. It was looking pristine on a lovely day in June 2026. It contains several marble statues.



The Orangery was designed by Sir John Soane and built in c.1789 when he was remodelling the interior of John Raymond Barker's Fairford Park mansion. The Orangery was dismantled after the house was pulled down in 1957 and was stored for many years by the National Trust until it was eventually re-erected at Sledmere House in 2005. The four plaques on the front of the building are made of Coade stone, a very durable artificial stone or ceramic that was invented by Eleanor Coade in about 1770 using a mixture of ingredients and a process that remained secret for nearly 200 years.

NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS

Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette 18 June 1881

A CHEAP EXCURSION – One of the cheapest excursions of late years from Oxford is announced for Tuesday next to that favourite sea-side resort, Weymouth. The excursion is organised by the Fairford Literary Society. The fare for the journey to Weymouth and return is only 6s., and we predict a heavy contingent from Oxford. We also hear that an excursion to Brighton, via the Thames branch will be shortly take place. The enjoyment of Oxonians will apparently be well cared for in the approaching excursion season.

Jackson's Oxford Journal 25 June 1881

EXCURSION TO WEYMOUTH – On Tuesday last an excursion to Weymouth (got up by a local committee) took place. The Great Western Company ran a special train from Fairford, and parties were made up to fill entire compartments, which were reserved both going and returning. Upwards of 300 from Witney took advantage of the opportunity for a trip to the coast under such favourable circumstances as the enjoyment of “nine hours at the seaside” for six shillings, and good company on the road. The “nine hours” promise was scarcely fulfilled, as the train did not reach Weymouth till nearly noon, and started on the return journey about half-past seven; but the day was quite long enough, and, in the case of Fairford excursionists, was lengthened out to 21 hours, or nearly a day and a night. The party was safely brought back again to Witney at half past one in the morning, but one missed the train, and had to pay the return fare next day,

Wilts and Glos Standard 7 July 1888

FAIRFORD PARK – Lady Katherine and Miss Raymond Barker have left Fairford Park and are gone for a short time to Weymouth. As in all probability Mr and Mrs Percy Raymond Barker will not take up their residence here until early in next year, the house will be left in the charge of a caretaker. This with fact that Morgan Hall still remains unlet, and that for some few weeks the Vicarage will be void, affords rather a gloomy outlook as regards trade prospects, never too bright at the best of times in Fairford.

Morning Post 14 May 1889

Colonel and Mrs Porter have let their house in Eaton-place for the season to Sir Philip Duncombe, and will spend the summer at Fairford Park, Gloucestershire, which they have taken for a term of years.

Wilts and Glos Standard 12 August 1899

BRISTOL AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Summer Meeting at Fairford

This vigorous Society, after its successful negotiation of the ambitious London programme of last year, this summer once more returned to the rural delights of its native county, the Cotswold and Coln-side town of Fairford being chosen as the centre of its customary three-day meeting, beginning on Wednesday and being continued on Thursday and Friday. That most important element, the weather, was all that could be denied, and there was a large and successful gathering, numbering upwards of a hundred. The renowned comfortable angling hostelry, the Bull Hotel, was made the headquarters, and Mr and Mrs Busby's excellent arrangements and unremitting exertions for the comfort of the large number of guests committed to their care gave complete satisfaction. The meeting was admirably organised by the General Secretary, the Rev W Bazeley, whose comprehensive illustrated guide to the places visited was, as usual, highly appreciated; while the necessary and multifarious local arrangements were excellently planned and carried out by Mr F P Bulley, who kindly undertook the arduous duties of local secretary. Mr Gardner S Basley, as president for the year, entered on his duties in the course of the first day of the meeting, and his notable presidential address on the subject of stained glass – a peculiarly appropriate topic to be selected for treatment at Fairford – was one of the not least striking features of a highly interesting and enjoyable meeting...