



# The Fairford Flyer

## Newsletter No 24

### January 2017

#### Winter of 1946-47- excerpts from the diary of Gordon Sadler, a then Fairford resident

Continued snow or frost from January until March. Temperatures from 30 to 40 degrees of frost (8 below zero). Breath froze into ice on blankets in bed. Thousands of people without fuel and electricity rationed, 10 to 14 foot snow drifts.

All roads to north of England & Scotland closed for several days, 200,000 sheep reported dead on hills besides cattle, pigs and poultry.

Floods followed, thousands of acres in Fenland covered for weeks, Thames, Wye, Severn rivers in flood. Villages and towns had no transport except by boat. Nothing planted in gardens until middle of April.

Industry at a standstill, sweet ration cut to war time ration of 2 oz per person per week. Potatoes unobtainable as pits were frosted and could not be opened.

Dead sheep were pulled from tops of trees where they had clambered during snow to nibble tips of branches for food. For several days no roads passable to north of England or Scotland or by rail. On April 16th Dutch engineers with special floating equipment came over from Holland to commence sealing gap to stop flow of sea water into Fen Country. An aeroplane left Fairford Aerodrome to take food supplies to relieve villages in Staffordshire that were snow bound and out of food. This aeroplane crashed in Staffordshire hitting side of hill and killing all six Air Force men on board.

April 23rd 1947 Severe gales general; ship blown to within 250 yards of shore near Swansea & 40 of the crew drowned, also 8 men who attempted rescue in lifeboat. Wind so strong it blew rockets back as they were fired.

May 2nd 1947

No sunshine up to the present, cold, windy and wet

(continued overleaf)

These are the entries in the back of an address book recently received from Claire Sadler in Australia. She had emailed from Australia asking if the Society would be interested in any photographs of the Sadler family who emigrated from Fairford in 1947.

The package from Brisbane contained an address book in the back of which was notes of the winter 1946/47 and some Sadler family history.

The above diary and other notes indicate that Gordon Sadler was very disillusioned about the state of post-war Britain. He listed the pros and cons of staying in this country and the cons won. His family was nominated to emigrate by Charles Hope of Brisbane, an ex Farmor's School pupil and well known to Fairfordians as the emigrant to Queensland who became a millionaire.

The package also contained not only photographs of Gordon's sporting achievements but a copy of the National Geographic Magazine of May 1948 which contains an article entitled 'By Cotswolds Lanes to Wold's End' by Melville Bell Grosvenor which has photographs of the Cotswolds including one captioned 'Fairford children romp in their garden beside a thatched cottage'. In fact it was a thatched shed in Mrs Acock's garden at Hazelwood on The Green with David Pitts and his cousin Paul.

It was a strange story how this magazine reached the Sadler's in Australia. A local librarian in Brisbane was sorting out the back copies of National Geographic and showed it to the Sadlers as there was a picture of Fairford, little knowing that the girls were actually Judith and Patricia Sadler who had never seen the photograph before. Their mother did not even know the picture had been taken over the garden gate.

At a recent FHS Committee meeting these Sadler items were shown to Committee members which includes Edwin Cuss. He had a great shock when he turned to the reverse of the photographs and found his writing on them. These photos had travelled before from Australia some 20 years earlier when Edwin had borrowed them. He had returned them and they now had come home again!

FHS really appreciates the effort made by Claire Sadler of presenting these to the Society.

**An extra FHS meeting in 2017**  
**SHOW and TELL**  
**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January at 10am in the Keble Room**  
**(see p12)**

## One of those coincidences!

In September we visited the Bingham Library where there was an art exhibition of paintings of Cirencester as part of the Heritage Weekend. We were admiring 'The surrender of Cirencester Abbey, 1539' by John Beecham which featured Abbot Blake surrendering to the Commissioners of Henry VIII, December 29, 1539. Abbot Blake came live in Fairford after 1539 and we were remarking that this was probably the oldest representation of a Fairford resident (apart from John Tame's brass (although realising John Beecham was painting at the latter half of the 19th Century and could not possibly have known what John Blake looked like). We were discussing this and a lady standing near us joined in the conversation as she was a descendant of John Beecham. Even more coincidentally she had emailed FHS a day or so previous asking for information about a relative, Sarah Hamblett, who was recorded being in Fairford in the 1841 census. I had done the preliminary research for answering this enquiry and found that this lady was a patient in The Retreat Asylum for a few months. Sarah was probably more of an eccentric. A story of hers was that, she had been staying with someone in Cheltenham, when she suddenly wanted to go home and walked back to Cirencester over Birdlip Hill in the middle of the night. It was such a coincidence that we met that day.

**For a link to this picture in the Bingham Library go to:**

**<http://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-surrender-of-cirencester-abbey-gloucestershire-1539-62809> or Google the title of the painting and Beecham**

John Beecham was a respected tradesman in Cirencester who utilised his spare time in public welfare and artistic pursuits. His father was an artist and herald painter in London and his son intended to follow the same profession but his studies were cut short at the age of 17 by his father's death. Related on his mother's side to James Miles, plumber and glazier of this town, he was invited after his father's death to come and help with the more artistic side of the business. This he did for a few years afterwards starting for himself in the same line. In addition to his work as a plumber and glazier he drew and printed on stone many hundreds of prints of the town and its neighbourhood and it is owing to his industry in this direction that we now possess such a good idea of the condition of the town at this time. The old hand press on which these lithographs were printed is stored at the library. All the paintings and drawings show the care he took with his buildings and it is quite possible that if he had been able to continue his studies when a young man he would have made a name for himself as a painter. He was born on April 19, 1813 in London and died on September 24, 3

## Excerpts from the Bull Hotel Visitor's book, 1920-31

Continued from the last Fairford Flyer

Frank Busby died in 1927 and there seem to be less creative entries after that except for the 1931 sketch. There were no entries during the war years but the book continues to late 1940s to 1959.

### October 26 1920

E A Corrrall. Banbury

With my name in the "visitors' Book"

That all who look may see

And people will say when they glance this way

Who the d----- is he?

### March 29 1925

Mr & Mrs J. A. Robinar, Holland House, Manchester

At the Bull Hotel we've stayed the night

The food is good, the service bright

So comfortable, our feather bed

That to each other we have said

We'll come back here some other day

When we can make a longer stay

### May 27 1925

J.J. Clayson alias 'Tubby' of the Embezzlers Society of Lyminge, Kent  
– Chairman

Mr & Mrs Hubert Finn-Kelcey both of the same Society and place

Miss Phil Finn-Kelcey one of the 'Also Rans'

Miss Kathleen Spiers of Lyminge, Kent too honest to be with the others.

[H Finn-Kelcey was an Auctioneer and Valuer. Does that give us a clue to this curious entry?]

### July 20 1925

C O Hitchcock

Sojourn not to be easily forgotten, owing to extreme courtesy and comfort throughout our stay. Sincerely hope to repeat the experiment in the near future

### September 1922

Overhead in a bedroom in the Bull

"Grant O Lord that I may catch a fish so large that I need not lie when I tell the story of its capture in the evening."



**Bull Hotel, Fairford Tuesday 8 Sept 1931**  
**Presentation of the insignia of 'The Order of the Trout' (1st class) to**  
**Montague Atkinson Esq O.T. 2½ brace weight 3lb 10 oz**

### Alma-Tadema

Perhaps some of you were watching the BBC's Antiques Roadshow's best moments over Christmas. They showed an 1883 lost portrait by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema. It is of a family friend, the engraver Leopold Lowenstam. Rupert Maas, the Roadshow's expert said: "Alma -Tadema was a Victorian neoclassical painter, whose paintings inspired Cecil B De Mille. The painting was brought in by the great-great grandson of Leopold Lowenstam, he and the artist were close family friends and the great-great grandmother was the governess of Sir Lawrence's children. The portrait was a wedding present in 1883 and it was exhibited at the Royal Academy a year later in 1884."

Edwin Abbey, the artist who lived at Morgan Hall, Fairford from 1890-1910, and Alma-Tadema were the closest of friends. Tadema often visited Abbey at Morgan Hall.

*'...a telegram arrived to say that Tadema was coming on a flying visit. ...Mrs Abbey recorded.... 'We sat down to dinner, which to save time, was carried into the studio in front of 'Hamlet' ... It is such a help and comfort to have anyone like Tadema come and talk things over. It clears the atmosphere - settles one's mind about many things, even when one differs in opinion...'*

After Abbey's death in 1911 Tadema wrote *"He [Abbey] was a golden nature warming like sunshine everyone who came near him"*.  
 From Edwin Austin Abbey by E.V. Lucas. Methuen, 1921.

### Raymond Barker

Just before Christmas we were contacted by an advisor in fine art who specialises in British art of all periods. She had recently acquired an album of watercolour paintings with Fairford and wider Gloucestershire connections. Several of the paintings are signed by people including: Augusta (daughter of John Raymond Barker and compiler of the album); 'Miss' Bosanquet (probably a niece of Harriet Ives Bosanquet, John Raymond's first wife); and Lady Emily Dundas (sister of Lady Katherine Moreton, John Raymond's second wife).

The collection includes three charming interior views of Fairford Park illustrating the drawing room, the dining room and the library which show rich furnishings including Chinese-style wallpaper and plush carpets and curtains. The paintings of Fairford Park probably date from the 1840s or early 1850s as Augusta married Sir Lumley Graham on New Year's Day 1856 and moved to Portsmouth.

## From the FHS and Newspaper Archives

From the Gloucestershire Chronicle — Saturday 6 March 1852

“**FAIRFORD** — Mr Ball held two inquests the other day on young boys who had been killed by being overrun with waggons. The names of the deceased were Daniel Rose and James Dawes; both were boys of 12 and 13 years of age respectively.—Verdicts—”Accidental Death” The coroner deeply lamented the employment of boys of that age in such a manner, and the jury in the latter case made an addition to the usual verdict of accidental death expressive of their regret that boys so young should be entrusted with horses and carriages.”

Daniel Rose was the son of machine-maker and porter Daniel and his wife Annabella Rose of Milton End. Young Daniel was buried in Fairford churchyard on 28th February. James Dawes was the son of Thomas and Sarah Dawes, also of Milton End. Thomas was an agricultural labourer who later became a groom. James was also buried in Fairford, on 6th March, just one week after Daniel.

From the Northampton Mercury — Friday 28 October 1892

### A fox in a drawing room

The Vale of the White Horse hounds found a fox in Lea Wood and ran him by Quenington to Hatherop Castle grounds across Fairford Park into the town of Fairford. After vainly attempting to get into a surgery window, the fox made across the churchyard, the hounds following in full cry. Reynard then ran through grounds and into the drawing-room, jumped through the window into the garden, and out again into London Street, where he was eventually lost after a good run of more than an hour.



## The Street where we live – Park Street by June Lewis

A longer version of this article appeared in **Cotswold Life** April 1990. It was written not long after the death of June's friend **Edna Jefferies** with whom she lived for 41 years. Published here with the permission of **Cotswold Life**.

Park Street is the prettiest, most unspoilt street in this ancient market town. Despite a handful of discretely placed new houses in the old farm complex, and street lamps, it would be still instantly recognisable to a no-matter-how-long-ago native. It was formerly **Calcutt Street** (according to the older maps), the name changed at the end of the nineteenth century, possibly it is the periphery of **Fairford Park**.

In living memory, there was **Prince Erik of Denmark** - he came to learn farming at **Park Farm**, and played snooker with ripe tomatoes in the **Bull** and had **The Times** tailing him to let the world know what he was getting up to. Then there was **David Niven**. He was a frequent visitor to the **Park** to see his godfather, **Colonel Palmer**. The day that **David** judged the carnival was a red-letter day, for there he was - in the street itself watching the fancy dress procession winding its colourful way into the **Park**; the greatest show in the west, is how old **Fairford Carnivals** were described - and their fame even reached the **London stage**, when it was reported to have been mentioned in one of the big shows.

There were lesser folk, by which I mean they would not be known to anyone outside the parish, but they were real folk who brought colour and rhythm to everyday life before the last war changed the world for ever.

There were drovers who hung around the cattle and horses tethered. The local butchers often had a set-to in **Wall's Yard** to settle who should have the prize beast to grace his shop. **Bottle Strange** [picture] and **Gallon Baxter** earned their nicknames for obvious reasons, out drinking each other in the pub and outbidding each other for the likeliest bargains with the horses.

Then there were the callers: **Squint Eye Billy** who would grind the knives and give striped bulls-eyes from his copious pockets as change; **Faringdon Jack** announced his arrival on the old rag and bone cart by a bellowing cry: 'Where be ya, then, let's be having your bones and skins'. **Fly-O-Gert** chose her customers; a large raw-boned woman with business acumen to match, **Gert** was certainly 'fly'.

On the back of her ancient bicycle she carried all manner of bargains in a battered brown suitcase, its lining spotted with aged mildew between the shirt stripes. From its curious-smelling depths Gert could produce 'just the thing for young Annie - off to service, I hear, so will be wanting something a bit decent-looking.

The street was the regular walk after church for the gentry, and before supper for the lunatics who were 'private' at The Retreat at the west end of town. Then came the army trucks and the evacuees, some to the cottages, and families for meals at the old workshops of the manor – re-named The Settlement as it took on its emergency centre role under an army of mothers and the local well-to-do, who conjured up gallons of stew and bushels of boiled potatoes in the cavernous boilers.

The street itself has little to distinguish it from any other: there has never been a shop, pub, or public place or even a trade carried on it. The south side of the street is taken up by the back side of the chemist, [the former charity shop now empty, but soon to become a tea shop], which property belongs to the High Street, the farm buildings, the dovecote yard and terminates with the Walnut Field.

The entire street is edged by Cotswold dry-stone walls. The north side of the street begins with The Lodge, where the lodge-keeper lived. A pretty Gothic style cottage, it makes an impressive start to the street. Always known as The Lodge, it never bore a number, neither did the next house – because that was the Gamekeeper's, with gun racks in the fire-side cupboard and a spy hole in the stone tiled privy at the top of the garden. However, now it is Number 3, despite the fact there are no numbers 1 or 2 - and even counting The Lodge there is a missing number.

The Row starts at Number 4 on the site of the old almshouses which burnt down in the eighteenth century. But the numbering is recent. It was always 'the Bennett's'. Mr Bennett was a small wiry man in polished gaiters. Groom at Park Farm, he was also Sunday morning barber for the street, exchanging the curry brush and hoof pickers for sharp scissors and clicking clippers, tidying up his neighbours and catching up on the news as he progressed along the cottages.

Next door was Bessie's. Bessie certainly never had a number – she never had stairs either. Just a rickety old ladder to get 'upstairs'. Tall, slim and impressive in long black skirts and snow-white apron which matched her tightly drawn back hair.

Bessie Day was the 'general' at the farm. Reporting for duty at 7 o'clock every morning with the men, she joined them later in the day after she had 'done for the Missus' in the house, mangold hoeing or chopping up frosty swedes.

Miss Boulton's cottage was distinguished by an arched doorway. The next two cottages were Carter's and Undercarter's who rarely agreed, resulting (for those days) changing tenancy. Then came Granny's. You had to go up steps to Granny, a physical climbing up which was right and proper as Granny was the matriarch of the street. Mother confessor and matronly mentor, Granny Agg held court in the small front room, her expansive form fitted between the large centre table and the fire hob, her hand constantly hovering over an enormous kettle, blackened with fire soot, matching the teapot which never ran dry.

If one was there long enough to witness the ceaseless stream of visitors, you would pick up the tip of adding a pinch of bicarb to the pot when the tea weakened as the sessions lengthened. In her role as Granny of the street, she helped many a body into this world and laid others out ready for the next – recalling all her 'cases' with chilling clarity.

In the block of four cottages the other side of the passage stands an attic above their neighbours. This was the cottage hospital until a new red-brick one - in deference to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee year, so very prominent in this Cotswold stone-built town. Beyond the four cottages number 12 to 15, is Number 16, built in 1905 to replace two tumbledown cottages where Crack Maggot lived next door to Sue and Chick Varney. Somewhere two numbers got lost again between the Bennett's and The Passage!

In 1948 three years after the war ended I came, as a child to number 15. When I saw 'the sticks of furniture' coming out of the cottage next but one I cried. I thought I was losing my newly-found friend to wider spheres, but it was only up to 'the Gamekeeper's'. I was invited for the weekend and stayed 41 years.

[Some years later June and Edna moved to Hartwell on the corner of Park Street.]

## Sketch of Park Street by June Lewis, 1992



Fairford Flyer edited by Alison Hobson. With contributions from Geoff Hawkes and Alison Hobson and the FHS Archive and June Lewis Archive.

## Meetings 2016-17

All meetings take place in the Farmor Room of the Fairford Community Centre at 7.30pm this year except for the **January and February meetings which are at 10 am**

### 2017

January 19 at 10am in the Keble Room upstairs **Show and Tell**

February 16 (half term) at 10 am **People** by Edwin Cuss

March 16 **Stonehenge: a new theory of purpose** by Sarah Ewbank

April 20 **Landscapes of the Coln Valley** by Alan Pilbeam

May 18 **Siege of Cirencester 1643** by John Paddock

June 15 AGM and talk to be arranged

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> January at 10am in the Keble Room**

## SHOW and TELL

A re-run of the old Primary School favourite.

You are invited to bring along and talk about any object that you consider to be of interest to an audience of History Society members. It can be of any period and any size within reason. A full-size long boat might be a little too large while a goat might be hard to see. We have successfully tried this idea out for previous meetings.

### RULES:

1. If you are prepared to join in just let Alison (01285 711768) or Geoff (01285 712053) know. No details required.
2. 5 minutes is the maximum length allowed. A bell will signal time is up.
3. Committee members will have a stand-by topic only to be used if needed. Fresh faces would be most welcome.

Enquiries Alison 01285 711768

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