

Fairford Flyer

No 68

November 2024

FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

Membership fees were due in September and remain at £5. Visitors are always welcome at £3. You can pay at the meeting or by bank transfer, Lloyds Bank, sort code 30-92-06 A/C Fairford History Society No 02170130). You can also leave the subscription at the Community Centre in the FHS post slot by the FTC office door.

FHS Meetings 2024-25

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 2025)

2024/2025 Programme

21 November Lost railways in and around Gloucestershire by Colin Moulden

There is no meeting in December

2025

16 January History of Christmas and wassailing by Robin Burton (afternoon meeting at 2.30pm)

21 February Edwin Cuss (afternoon meeting at 2.30pm)

20 March John Putley on a topic to be decided.

24 April (4th Thursday) Maps and LiDAR imagery for historic studies in and around the Fairford and Cirencester areas by Peter Vujakovic of *GlosGeog* (Gloucestershire Branch of the Geographical Association)

15 May Fairford's part in the Second World War by Chris Hobson

19 June AGM Show and Tell

Dates for your Diary

October 26 -November 3 Cirencester History Festival

St Mary's Church, Fairford - stewarding

As an historic and much visited church, the role of stewards who welcome and help visitors is much appreciated. Time always brings changes, and we have lost several stewards over the last few months and we need replacements. If you can spare an hour or so, please do get in touch with either Sally Salter or Alison Godsal. Alison - alison@godsall.co.uk or Sally - sallysalter295@hotmail.co.uk

October Meeting

Industrial Archaeology in your Garage, Shed and Attic by Bill King



Once again Bill King gave an interesting and entertaining lecture on the above subject. He began pointing out the industrial archaeology in the landscape: Silbury Hill, built c. 2400~2300 BCE, archaeologists calculate that it took 18 million man-hours, equivalent to 500 men working for 15 years to build and we still have no idea why it was built. Stonehenge, hill forts and ridge and furrow etc are all other examples of archaeology in the landscape. Interestingly the word furlong derives from 'a furrow long' when ploughing.

Surnames often derive from a person's occupation e.g. Wheeler, Cartwright, Cutler, Smith. The tools used by these craftsmen are usually the same design today although sometimes mechanised by electricity of more recently universal batteries.

Old tools inherited from our parents or grandparents are often found in our sheds and garages. They were built to last not like our present-day tools. Some old items are now sometimes used for other purposes: the heavy iron items as doorstops; containers, e.g milk churns as garden planters; bigger items as garden ornaments. We have address stampers from my great-aunts newsagents which we use as paperweights.

Celluloid was the precursor to Bakelite invented by the American Dr Leo Baekeland. The old black telephones are a good example of Bakelite although they break easily when dropped as Bakelite is brittle.



Bill encouraged the audience to look around their houses when they got home and see what 'industrial archaeology' could be found.

A Lost Dog Story by Chris Hobson



During a recent family holiday to Charmouth in Dorset we visited the museum in Lyme Regis and among the fossilised remains of Jurassic dinosaurs and old photographs of the town we were surprised to find a Fairford connection. One of the display cabinets was full of photographs and artefacts relating to the loss of the battleship HMS Formidable which was torpedoed off Portland Bill by a U-boat on New Year's Day 1915. The Captain of the ship was Arthur Noel Loxley, one of the sons of the Reverend Arthur Smart Loxley the vicar of Fairford from 1878 to 1888. Although born in Northamptonshire in 1874 Arthur Noel spent his childhood in Fairford. If you have bought a copy of '*Fairford's local heroes*' (copies still available) you will already know about the lives of the three Loxley brothers who died during the First World War.

One of the items in the display cabinet in the museum was a small book titled '*Captain Loxley's little dog*'. The brief caption revealed that Captain Loxley had a little terrier called Bruce with him on board the ship and that he and his dog, which refused to leave his master's side, remained on the ship's bridge as it sank beneath the waves. Arthur's body was never found but Bruce's body was washed ashore at nearby Abbotsbury three weeks later.

After arriving back home we decided that we must buy a copy of the book and so found a copy on ABE Books, a useful source of second-hand books. The book was published in 1915 by Hodder and Stoughton, the book's author John Ernest Hodder-Williams being one of the company's directors. The book soon arrived and had an inscription written by its first owner dated March 1915. It is a sentimentalised fictional account of the relationship between Captain Loxley and his little dog and their last moments together as the ship went down. Bruce was buried in the dog's cemetery in Abbotsbury Gardens and is commemorated by a headstone. Captain Loxley is one of the 8,517 sailors who died in the First World War and who have no known grave and are commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. This sad story does not end there. Bruce actually belonged to Arthur Noel's son Peter (called 'Little Master' in the book) who gave the dog to his father as a companion while on his last voyage. Peter became a diplomat and Winston Churchill's First Secretary and was killed in an aircraft accident in February 1945 while on his way to the Yalta Conference.

Coincidentally, in the weeks before this holiday FHS had an enquiry about the Rev Arthur Smart Loxley from his granddaughter for whom information was provided about his time as Vicar of Fairford, 1878-1888.

Winter evenings' entertainment in Fairford.

During the late Victorian winter evenings, there was no lack of entertainment taking place in the town. The events took place in the Infant Schoolroom, the Congregational Schoolroom in the Croft or sometimes the Reading Room at that time also in the Croft formerly Croft Hall. Usually there was a collection to raise money towards various causes, or at least cover the cost of the performance.

The Rev J S Grant of the Congregational Church in the Croft for some years organised fortnightly 'Pleasant evenings for the people' when residents could show off their talents, sometimes it was a lecture, or a lantern slide show or singing. There was no lack of talent in Fairford.

Newspaper Cuttings

North Wilts Herald 9 November 1888

PLEASANT EVENINGS FOR THE PEOPLE: The sixth season of these popular entertainments, under the presidency of the Rev J S Grant, was commenced in the School-room of the Congregational Church on Thursday evening in last week, when a full audience and several encores plainly showed the interest in the entertainments had in no measure abated. The programme was a miscellaneous one of vocal and instrumental music, readings recitations, and sketches. A short address by "A Working Man," who wound up with a solo, put the audience in capital humour. Mr Dancy, who made his first appearance, rendered Tom, Hood's "Sally Brown" very effectively, and his sketch of the trial of "Bardell v Pickwick," in which he impersonated the characters of Sergeant Buzfuz, Q.C., and Mrs Clappins, a witness, created roars of laughter. The Rev J S Grant gave the first of a series of "Word Portraits": or strange faces from my notebook." Misses A Crampton and E Garlick, and Mr Brown acted as accompanist. [The programme follows - a list of names and their acts].... The season's programme includes lectures with dissolving views on Egypt, the Holy Land, the Reformation in England; athletics, as applied to health preservation and lifesaving; prize competitions, etc. It is intended to continue the entertainments fortnightly throughout the winter season, and the committee solicits the hearty co-operation of any friends who are willing to assist. The entertainments are strictly unsectarian and deserve the hearty support of those who wish to provide support of those who wish to provide a healthy entertainment for the class they are especially intended to benefit.

North Wilts Herald 30 November 1888

The members of St Mary's Church Choir gave their annual concert in the Infant School-room, on Thursday last week. There was a full house, and the enthusiastic manner which the audience testified their appreciation of the varied programme must have been very gratifying. The choir were kindly assisted by the Vicar and Mrs Carbonell, and it may be remarked how singularly fortunate Fairford may consider itself having had two successive vicars who have shown they possessed excellent musical abilities. The late vicar [Rev A S Loxley], whose memory is still fresh in the minds of the parishioners, was conspicuous for his willingness to lend his talents in this respect to any cause conducive to their pleasure and enjoyment; and the kindness of Mr and Mrs Carbonell in coming forward on the present occasion may be taken as an acceptable proof of their desire to follow in his steps. The resuscitated Fairford Orchestral Society also lent their valuable aid and enlivened the programme by the performance of several selections, the trios for violin, violincello, and pianoforte being especially effective and worthy of note. Mrs Carbonell's songs, however, were the feature of the evening, and were vociferously encored...

The performance of the glees by the choir was very meritorious and evidenced careful training. Mr Taylor [headmaster of Farmor's School] deserves a word of praise for the manner in which his boys acquitted themselves...

For the first time the room was lighted with gas, and at the close the Vicar, in thanking the audience of behalf of the choir for their kind patronage, said it was entirely due to the Orchestral Society, who had generously come forward to help them that night, that the gas was laid on and the fittings provided. The society intended giving a concert towards the expenses, and he hoped they would be liberally patronised. ...

North Wilts Herald 09 November 1888

Lecture: On Wednesday evening the Rev F R Carbonell (vicar) gave an interesting and instructive lecture on 'Storm, Wind and Rain.' There was a large and appreciative audience. The Rev. lecturer commenced by explaining that, though on the surface of the earth, we must regard ourselves at the bottom, as it were, of an ocean of air.... areas of high and low pressure, and on their usual relative positions, and the rev. gentleman, fearing he might tire the patience of his hearers, then he said he should be glad, if they wished to hear him, to finish the lecture on some other evening, probably on the 28th inst. This announcement was received with hearty applause, and a vote of thanks was passed to the lecturer on the motion of Lieut. Col Archer, seconded

by Rev J S Grant, the Vicar suitably replying. It should be mentioned that the lecture was given in aid of the Reading Room Fund, a small charge for admission being made to non-members.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 15 December 1888

Entertainment: Mr Horace Chester gave another of his humorous musical entertainments to a large party of patients and friends at The Retreat, Fairford on Monday evening last week, entitled "Broad Grins" and for nearly two hours kept his audience in a high state of merriment.

Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard 20 October 1888

**THE GREAT
OLYMPIA HIPPODROME & CIRCUS**

The acknowledged Success of 1888! Twice as Large! Twice as Good! And totally different to the ordinary Circus, with all the Extraordinary Attractions that on Two Occasions so delighted and astonished

HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN

And all London and Paris, will visit

CIRENCESTER, Wednesday October 24

FAIRFORD. Thursday October 25

OLYMPIA'S MONSTER MARQUEE

Or Canvas Pavilion (capable of holding 7.000 persons), is the largest ever erected in Great Britain, containing as it does, Two Gigantic Arenas or Racing Tracks - one a 50-foot Circle, the other a 300-foot Hippodrome Course, for

Gladitorial Combats, Roman Games, The Twenty-Horse "La Poste", Chariot Racing, Roman Riding, Ladies' steeplechase, Ponies' Flat race,

And other Sensational Acts of the recent Paris and London Seasons.

The Greatest Novelty of all is, however, a veritable

STAG HUNT

With the same Two superb and splendidly-antlered Stags, and the same FULL PACK of HOUNDS (late the property of the

D'Aumale) that so delight England's Queen and 600,000 Visitors to "Olympia," From "The Meet" to the "Death of the Stag," the whole of the exciting and realistic incidents of "The Chase" will be faithfully portrayed, and supported by a "Full Field" of superbly mounted Ladies and Gentlemen of the Hunt, Huntsmen, Whippers-in etc.

As many as 150 Horses, Ponies, Mules, Mustangs and other Trained Animals are attached to this Monster Establishment.

GRAND PROCESSION DAILY AT 12.30

Headed by the Splendid Military Band.

25 items in the Programme Twice daily, including all the attractions mentioned above, and the best of Equestrians, Gymnasts, Acrobats, Tight-rope Artistes, Vaulters, and Trapeze performers, headed by the Famous Feeley Family (the Wonders of the World - Eight in number). The whole enlivened by the refined feeling of

THE CLOWNS AND DROLLS OF "OLYMPIA."

First performance at 2.30; doors open at 2. Second 7.45; doors open at 7.

TICE - great School Treat - All Children under 12 years of age will be admitted to the Afternoon Performances on payment of 2d each.

Unfortunately, we cannot find any reports of this event in the newspapers, so we do not know where the event took place or how well it was received by the audience. The logistics of moving it from Cirencester to Fairford in one evening/morning are mind boggling!