

# Fairford Flyer

## Extra No 12

July 2020

FAIRFORD HISTORY



SOCIETY

We hope you are enjoying these online newsletters. If anyone has anything they would like to contribute or have any local history questions please email [enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@fairfordhistory.org.uk).

We normally do not have meetings in July and August, but towards the end of July/ beginning of August a much longer 'Fairford Flyer' is usually sent to all members with membership renewal information. At the moment the plan is to continue with these 'Extras' until the end of July, take a break in August and issue one at the beginning of September when hopefully we shall know whether the September 17th meeting can take place.

### Edwin Austin Abbey: Cricket at Morgan Hall

When Abbey first saw Morgan Hall he saw the potential for a cricket pitch on the front lawn. As an American he was keen on baseball but he was fascinated by cricket. In 1898, the year of his election as a Royal Academician, Abbey founded the Artists Cricket Club and established the custom of an annual cricket festival at Morgan Hall, in which connection he wrote to an American friend that cricket 'takes the mind off the things of this world, such as paint and models.'

Abbey spent a great deal of time and trouble in preparing the pitch at Morgan Hall, he describes an incident during rolling to his brother-in-law Frederick Mead "To add to our trouble, the weight on the roller slid back this morning and nearly hung the horse...If he hadn't been cut down he would have been hung. He broke one of the iron shafts. He is a hired steed - and if he had died no doubt he would have turned out very valuable. The boy who lies on the ground is of no value."



He was not a great batsman and always went in last, one season 7 was his highest score, but he was a good fielder as a result of his baseball experience and an enthusiastic bowler. Four matches were played during that first cricket week; the Artist's side lost two and won two. He designed the blazer and cap for the Artist's XI himself. Many famous people came to play cricket at Morgan Hall including Sir James Barrie with his team the Allahhakbaris.

He was also great cricket reformer and thought the rules ought to be altered and the game speeded up.....One of Abbey's reforms was tried with success during the week of 1901. In order that everyone might have a chance of batting it was arranged that at the fall of the fifth wicket the other side should come in, terminating their innings also at the fall of the fifth wicket (or by declaration earlier). The first side then resumed their innings with the not-out men until the next five wickets had fallen, and so on. The plan worked out very merrily, but has not been adopted, except that it is a similar idea to Twenty20 cricket.

Record exist of many of these matched with their scores and a painting by the artist Frank Batson called 'Playing out time, awkward light' said to be of cricket at Morgan Hall hangs in the Long Room at Trent Bridge.

After Abbey died the Artist's Cricket Club continued at least up to the start of World War One. They never elected a new President; Edwin Austin Abbey could never be replaced.

The following season reaped the following results:

**1899**

April 25

Varnishing Day Match v Chelsea Arts Club.— Won.

April 26

E A Abbey's Fairford XI v Chelsea Arts Club.— Lost

May 10

E A Abbey's Fairford XI v Savile Club.— Won

May 19

E A Abbey's Fairford XI v JM Barrie's XI.— Won

June 1

E A Abbey's Fairford XI v Authors,  
A Conan Doyle's XI.— Lost

June 15

E A Abbey's Fairford XI v Musicians  
(R Kennerley Rumford's XI).— Lost.

The Artists' XI  
1902



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### **A bit more on Samuel Vines...**

Taken from a journal of Samuel Vines in an article by June Lewis in Gloucestershire and Avon Live, April 1985:

I have long had a desire to see the sea. Today that desire was gratified. Oh what a glorious sight is the sea. Went from Cirencester by railway to Swindon, where there were great preparations for building a large station, then by Great Western to Bristol. A dirty old bustling city is Bristol.

Oh, there were such roads as was never seen in Gloucestershire. At times it is like going across the dry ditches, at others like a ploughed field composed of slag (cinders). They have numerous Sociables on the roads, drawn by one or two horses, but charge well enough - 1d a mile to see the lions (sights) of this country, which all about tells me I am far from my own.

Got to Penzance before dark - a large town of about 16,000 inhabitants I stayed at the Shoulder of Mutton, kept by a widow named Anger, who was mightily pleased that I came from Gloucestershire, as she had a brother at Malmesbury. I know him - he is a large farmer. I had to tease her that Gloucestershire folks are not Moonrakers, like the Wiltshire folk, but she took it all in good heart, the more so when she seemed to know of Mr Anger who was an old-fashioned hill country farmer in good times and well feathered his nest. By consequence I think she added a larger lump of suet with what I term a very coarse boiling piece.

Now I am at the First and Last Inn in England. The ocean is all spotted about with sails, and the rocks covered with gulls. This appears to be the Parliament of the feathered tribe, and I dare say their deliberations are as wise as our imperial.

The Methodists and Teetotallers have a strong hold down in Cornwall. The walls of the inn were written all over with the names of those who visited Lands End, that romantic spot. One let fly at the landlord: "Old Bothereass your brandy is very dear and your wine is very bad." I was relieved to see the writer had dated in 1837, so I could not be suspected of authorship. A night at sea sailing up the Bristol Channel is a novelty. Beautiful is the effect of the moon rising on the waves. When we reach the Port of Bristol I shall know that God delivered me safely from this journey - but disappointed that as a freshwater man I have not been sea sick on this voyage home.

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## FROM THE NEWSPAPERS - MORE CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

### DARN THAT SOCK!

As a precursor to the case of John Mitchell which was covered in Fairford Flyer Extra No.11, the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard of the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1841 reported another piece of clever investigative work by the Fairford police:

"James Wheeler, of Poulton, was brought up in custody under the following circumstances. Mr. Hayward, of Poulton, stated that he was awoken on Sunday night, by some person, who, he supposed, was walking about his premises. He got out of bed, and looked out of the window, and could perceive some person in his orchard. He dressed himself, and went out, but the person was gone. In the morning he discovered some apple, cherry, fir, and ash trees had been cut down or barked. He sent for one of the Fairford police, who examined the footmarks, and discovered that the person who had committed the offence, had, directly he had entered the orchard, pulled his shoes off, and walked about in his stockings, one of which, having a hole in it, showed the imprint very plainly of the toe. He (Mr. Hayward) being positive in his own mind that the person charged was the person he had seen in his orchard, communicated his suspicions to the police constable, who immediately went to the house where Wheeler lived, and found there a pair of shoes which answered exactly to the footmark in the orchard, and also a pair of stockings, one of them having a hole as above described, which had evidently been used without shoes. This and other conclusive evidence being brought before the Bench, he was committed to Northleach for two months."

Perhaps one of the first thoughts that James Wheeler had when he was confronted with such damning evidence of his crime was 'darn that sock!' in both senses of the phrase

### ANOTHER NORTHLEACH PRISONER

A brief note in the Wilts and Gloucestershire Standard of the 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1848 simply states that on Monday the 13<sup>th</sup> of March John Ponting, a labourer of Fairford, was brought up in custody before John Raymond Barker for stealing a pick axe and was committed for trial at the next sessions.

Fortunately, the Gloucester County Gaol register provides more information on the people who committed minor crimes not worthy of more than a few lines in a newspaper. John Ponting was admitted to Gloucester County Gaol on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March to await his trial which took place at the Easter Session at Gloucester on the 21<sup>st</sup> of March. The register includes quite a detailed description of each prisoner's physical appearance. John was described as being 22 years of age, height five foot four and three-quarters inches, with brown hair, light hazel eyes, a long face and sallow complexion. Distinguishing features were a broad nose inclining to the right, two moles of his upper left arm and another mole on his left cheek.

The register also reveals that John stole the pick axe from Matthew Saunders, a blacksmith of London Street, in April 1847 so one wonders why it took almost a year for the case to come to trial. John was found guilty and sentenced to five weeks hard labour in the Northleach House of Correction but the register reports that he was discharged from the prison on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March by a Court Order. Perhaps he was released early because he had a wife and two children to support and his conduct was recorded as being 'good' during his short period of incarceration.

### **THE STRANGE CASE OF THE GERMAN SHEEP KILLER**

No, this isn't a previously unpublished Sherlock Holmes thriller but a real incident that happened in Fairford 165 years ago. Jackson's Oxford Journal often reported Fairford news in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the issue of the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1855 included the following report:

"John Liser, a German tramp, was charged, on Monday last, with stealing a quantity of bread from the shop of Miss Stone, of Newland; he was taken before Walter Strickland, Esq., the following morning, and committed to take his trial at the ensuing assizes. The Superintendent, observing marks of blood on his clothes, was induced to search him, and found a portion of mutton concealed on his person; having questioned him as to how he obtained the meat, he confessed he had killed a sheep in the neighbourhood of Fairford. The Superintendent having been informed that one had been stolen from the flock of Mr. Iles, of Fairford, took the prisoner down there, who directed him to a plantation where it was cooked, and there several bones and portions of the lost sheep were found. He was taken before the magistrates on Thursday last, and committed to take his trial at the next Gloucester Assizes. Mr. Iles was bound over to prosecute."

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1855 John Liser was sentenced to four year's penal servitude for stealing a sheep at Fairford on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January. The gaol register records that John Liser was then aged 32 and was born in Prussia. However, John Liser did not serve his full sentence as the Gloucester St Nicholas records reveals that he was buried on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, his body having been delivered from the country gaol. The gaol register states that he had white spots all over his body when he was admitted and that he died of consumption in the prison hospital at three o'clock in the morning on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April. It also stated that had been in England for seven years and had lived by begging all that time.

### **A SPATE OF NON-ROBBERIES**

The following report appeared in the Cirencester Times and Cotswold Advertiser of the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1863:

"As Henry Staples was returning home to Kempsford, from Cirencester, on the night of the 11<sup>th</sup>, and when half-way between Maisey Hampton and Marston Maisey, he stated he was robbed of his purse containing 7 shillings and a knife, by two men dressed in black clothes, and who afterwards knocked him down, kicked him, and then beat him with some instrument. On Tuesday information was sent to Fairford police station, and PC M'Rae was dispatched to investigate the case. The constable found, however, that Staples had told two or three different tales respecting the robbery, and on examining him found no marks of violence, and the clothes he had worn on the evening were perfectly clean. The constable then told him if he did not at once tell the truth he should take out a warrant and apprehend him. This so frightened him that he begged the constable to forgive him, for he had not been stopped at all, but that he had been drinking, and had spent the money with which he should have paid his lodgings, and had raised this tale on purpose to blind his landlady and master. Great praise is due to the constable for the skilful manner in which he came to the truth of the case. This is the third report of the kind that has been raised in this neighbourhood."

No further action was taken in this case although today it would be considered a criminal offence of wasting police time and could result in a jail sentence of up to six months. Luckily for Henry Staples he probably just received a warning.