

The Pudding Pie Fair

The Pudding Pie Fair is Deddington's most famous event. This description is taken from the 1933 *Story of Deddington*, by Mary Vane Turner [pp 62-64]:

Deddington fairs are given in the *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County of Oxford* (1852) as August 10th, the Saturday after Old Michaelmas and November 22nd. The last was the 'pudding pie Fair' and its glory over-shadowed all the rest. Weather lore has been associated with it from time immemorial.

'What the wind is at midnight 'fore Deddington Fair, so will it mostly stay the rest of the year.' 'Or for three months ahead', said Mr William Hirons, Deddington's oldest inhabitant; 'I noticed the wind blowing right from Duns Tew this last fair day (1931) and South-West its been mostly since.'

That was spoken in January 1932, Mr Hirons being then almost certainly well over one hundred years of age, for he distinctly remembered

walking to his baptism, which was registered 98 years ago. He was a shining example of the adage that hard work never kills, and to his exact and lively memory this record owes much.

'Four o'clock in the morning and a fine day for the pudding pie Fair!'. That was how the Watchman ushered it in. If it were not fine one wonders whether he had the heart to say so! Wet or dry anyhow there were pudding pies, and buying and selling and much noise.

The Fair figures yet in the list and is fitfully, very slightly in evidence. In 1931 quite thirty young cart horses and Welsh ponies were trotted out for sale along the 'Horse Fair'; the ponies, pretty wild creatures in their rough coats, travelling with their drovers through likely counties where there might be a chance to dispose of them before beginning the expense of winter feed.

Previously for quite two years there

had been no horse dealing, merely the rather pathetic sight of a dozen donkeys with the traditional high pommels and pinafore covers, brought into the market place under the assumption that would have a holiday, which they did not. However, as the donkeys were ascertained to be on their way to winter quarters in Wales after a strenuous seaside season, lack of patronage was of no grief to them.

Pudding pies have not been made in Deddington for the past six years. Miss Ruth Fowler of 'the Old Bakery', whose family had the original recipe from the Bennetts, who were baking in 1852, undoubtedly made that historic delicacy just as it should be, for in sampling one I found it corresponded exactly with the jesting descriptions which every elder Deddingtonian, including Miss Fowler, delights to give.

'They say you could tie a label to

Continued on back page

Programme of meetings for 2001

14 March John Cheney: Cheneys of Banbury, printers

11 April John Leighfield: Oxfordshire in maps

12 May Deddington Castle Day School: see 'From the Chair', right.

Meetings take place at the Windmill Centre in Deddington at 7.30 on the second Wednesday of the month.

From the Chair Deddington Castle

History Society members are likely to be interested in the day school that we are organising in conjunction with Oxford University Department for Continuing Education, to be held at the Windmill Centre on Saturday 12 May. The day will be devoted to Deddington Castle. We chose a date in May in the hope of getting some decent weather...

A major purpose of the day will be to set the castle site in context. Trevor Rowley will discuss if it was typical for its period, or a 'one-off'. What, if anything, was there before it? David Griffiths is interested in how far we can reconstruct the historical landscape that was the castle's setting. Was there, as seems possible, a hunting park attached, and if so, where was it? Mark Bowden will explain the various

techniques that archaeologists use in surveying such sites. So, if you want to know what is the 'geo-phys' that Time Team is always going on about, this will be your chance. In the afternoon there will be a tour of the site. We all know it intimately, of course, but I'm sure that I, for one, will understand it a great deal better when its features are explained by the archaeologists. If you want to come, please call the Department for Continuing Education on 01865 270368 or by email to pppdayweek@conted.ox.ac.uk. If you want lunch (all proceeds to the History Society's coffers, to fund our research projects), please contact Moira Byast (338637) or Sue Shattock (33880).

I hope to see you all there.

Chris Day

Oxfordshire at War

February talk by Dr Malcolm Graham, Director of the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies

The speaker at our February meeting, Malcolm Graham, should be credited with setting up the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies at the Central Library in Oxford, one of the first and still one of the most important such centres in the country. It contains a vast amount of material relating to Oxfordshire and the neighbouring counties. There is a tremendous collection of reference works and source material, from trade directories, to sale catalogues, census returns, parish registers, etc. And one must not forget the huge photographic collection and oral history records. He has managed to achieve all this during a time of financial stringency. The COS is open to all—perhaps the most accessible of the many research resources available in Oxford. His book, *Oxfordshire at War*, published only in 1994 is now sadly out of print.

He started by asking how people in Oxfordshire heard the news—on the radio, or from shouts in the street. The Mounthill Ramblers went to the Cotswolds at 11am on Sunday 3 September 1939, arriving at a Burford full of unofficial evacuees, and heard of the outbreak of war, but continued their walk on to Bourton-on-the-Water!

A Packer of Chipping Norton photo shows children arriving by train at Chippy—the train at least a dozen carriages long. However only half of the official evacuees expected arrived in the Banbury Rural District. Some children got off at the wrong station (sometimes just to look for a toilet) and were separated from their friends for good. A child arriving at Banbury was heard to ask ‘where’s the sea, gov’nor?’ His only previous trip outside London having been to the sea.

Oxford became a centre of the fishing industry—due to the relocation of the Ministry! Malvern College came to Blenheim [as did MI5], as the Admiralty wanted the Malvern College buildings until their deep shelters were built in London [where my father remembered being told to shelter under his steel

desk during the V bombs].

The war was often fun for children, like the movies coming to your street, and so many new sights. The first air raid warning in Oxfordshire was three days later: it was a false alarm and the risk of a road accident in the black-out was perhaps greater than bombing! Not a lot happened until May 1940, and the fall of France. Much of the fun poked at the Home Guard was based in fact. Enthusiasm for the Home Guard faded, and it had to become compulsory. Women were initially excluded from the Home Guard, but *ad hoc* arrangements were set up in some villages.

In the summer of 1940 there was a huge programme of pill box building (in competition with airfield building). The former are now being mapped by English Heritage. And the road signs and place-names were removed from war memorials; even from horse troughs and carriers’ carts.

The first major civilian bombing in Oxfordshire took out the signal box at Banbury and most of the town’s gasometers, but Oxfordshire got off fairly lightly, with no raids for about three years and only a handful of people killed in the raids (from the 4,700 bombs dropped on the county) during the whole war.

Numerous buildings were destroyed, but to make way for the

new airfields, where the county went from four to about 20. It was said that Oxfordshire had more airfields per square mile than any other county: Harwell was used for Horsa gliders for the D-Day Normandy Landings.

Farming became a huge priority—many agricultural workers had joined the forces and women, children and PoWs were all pressed into service. The amount of land under grass was hugely reduced—even golf courses were no longer sacred. There were eventually some 1,700 Land Girls in Oxfordshire. The now-disused grain silo south of Kidlington is a relic of this period—built close to the Oxford to Cambridge railway for ease of distribution. There were many shortages and saving was everything: at one time coal almost ran out in Oxfordshire.

Crusader tanks were built at the Morris works at Cowley. Northern Aluminium in the Southam Road, Banbury, produced wings for aircraft. Many of the temporary hospital buildings of the time, such as the Churchill, have lasted fifty years or more. Penicillin was first made and trialed at the Radcliffe. The Binfield Women’s Knitting Circle produced 4,000 garments during the war!

But on the whole Oxfordshire had a relatively quiet war.

Soldiers in the stable yard of Deddington Manor during the war. Apparently the other ranks slept on straw mattresses in the hay loft. We are grateful to Primrose Roberts, who lived at the Manor at the time, for this photo, to Mrs Buffy Heywood for making it available and to Colin Robinson for the scan.



John Fardon, Deddington clockmaker

Many of us are aware of the local clockmaking family of Fardon, which flourished in the 18th century, and a few Fardon clocks survive in the neighbourhood. The discovery of a will and inventory for John Fardon (d. 1744) is therefore likely to be of interest to members. The will is too long for full transcription here, so I have made extracts. The inventory is in full.

Will, 8 April 1743

I, John Fardon, of Dadington [*sic*] in the county of Oxford, clockmaker, being weak and infirm of body but of a sound mind, memory and understanding, blessed be God for the same, do make, publish and ordain this my last will and testament in manner following, viz. first I give to my loving wife Mary all that my messuage [*ie* house] or tenement wherein I now dwell, situate in Dadington aforesaid in a street there called the Market Street and after her decease to my son John. Also all those my three messuages in a certain lane there called Hoofe Lane [*ie* Horsefair] which I bought of Job Cole and others, and my closes called Deep Slade, to Mary my wife to hold until John shall attain the age of one and twenty years. If John should die without lawful issue before the age of one and twenty years then I bequeath the aforesaid property to my wife for term of life. The remaining part of my personal estate I will that my wife shall have at her own disposal if she remain a widow, but if she shall marry again I then give and bequeath to my wife only the rents for the term of her life. After her decease all my property is to go to my loving brothers Richard and Jonathan Fardon, both of Northnewton [North Newington], my loving sister Mary Fardon of Dadington, widow, wife of my late brother Thomas, my two loving brothers John Smith of Temple Mill in the county of Oxford and John Sutton of Roke near Wallingford, to be equally divided between them, share and share alike. I give to my loving brother-in-law Samuel Cox of Thame 20s., and to my two brothers-in-law John Cox of Milton in the parish of Adderbury and Thomas Cox of Bloxham 50s apiece. If my son John should die without lawful

issue before the age of one and twenty years, my brothers-in-law John and Thomas Cox shall receive £20 apiece. I give to my loving brother-in-law George Pottinger of the west side of Adderbury £10. And to my brother-in-law Samuel Cox the further sum of £10. And to my sister-in-law Mary Pottinger of the west side of Adderbury, £10. And to William Marshall[?] of Millcomb, tailor, £10. And to Thomas Gilkes of Sibford Gower, with whom I served an apprenticeship, £5. And to John Adkins of the west side of Adderbury, £5. To Hannah, daughter of John Taylor of Milton, £5. To be paid to them nine months after the decease of my son John. The remainder of my estate I give to my wife Mary.

Witnesses: Richard Adkins, Charles Spencer and Richard Davis. The will was proved 5 June 1744.

Inventory

Inventory of the goods etc. of John Fardon, clockmaker, taken 30 May 1744 by Edward Robinson and Joseph King.

First, his wearing apparel and money in his purse, £10 2s. 7d.

Also in the Hall, pewter and brass, a table, four chairs, five irons and some other odd things, £4 15s. 0d.

In the Parlour, a table, two joined stools, eight chairs, a clock and two cases, two weather glasses, £3 1s. 6d.

In the wash house, some odd lumber, 5s.

In the Cellar, four barrels, four tubs, six forms and lumber, £2. 2s. 0d.

In the Chamber over the hall, a bedstead, bed and furniture, hanging press, two coffers, and two chairs, £2 15s. 0d.

In the chamber above the parlour, a bedstead, flock bed and a chest, trunk, case of drawers, little Table, three chairs, £3 11s. 0d.

In the garrets, a little bedstead, flock bed, and some lumber, £1 6s. 0d. Linen, £2 5s. 0d.

Working tools, £3 15s. 0d.

Money due to the deceased on securities, £70.

Total = £103 13s.

Fardon's will is fairly typical of the period. It is useful in tracing family connexions, which were widespread across the county. There is an interesting reference to his time as an apprentice and to his fellow apprentice Thomas Gilkes. Clockmaking was a trade in which religious nonconformists were prominent, and both the Fardon and the Gilkes families were Dissenters. You may feel that John is unduly pessimistic about the survival chances of his son. The son may, of course, have been sickly, but bear in mind that even the healthy young were at risk from opportunistic infections and epidemics. The death of the young was something that parents experienced much more than we can imagine.

The will tells us what street Fardon lived in, but not which house. We learn about his other properties in Deddington, both houses and land. He may have farmed on a small scale, as craftsmen and tradesmen often did. The overall impression is of modestly comfortable circumstances.

The inventory (which is of movable goods and debts) is disappointing in that the appraisors gloss over the item we would most like to have details for, viz. his 'working tools'. Note that almost seven tenths of the value of his estate is in credit. The money bequests in his will may never have been paid out if the debts could not be recovered. At this date most tradesmen were similarly precariously placed. The house furnishings again suggest modest comfort rather than luxury. It is likely that Fardon owned some books. If so, we would like to know what, but the appraisors ignored any books they saw, or included them with 'lumber'. Those who saw the recent television programme 'The Shock of the Old' will have seen how the role of the hall has changed over the centuries, from being the main living room to a reduced role as an entrance lobby. In Fardon's house the hall is still a living room, but the parlour has made its appearance. The house appears to be of three storeys, with a cellar and two rooms on each floor at ground level and above.

Continued from front page

one and send it through the post a hundred miles—so hard it was.'

'Deddington folk were supposed to save up all the scrapings from the candle drippings in the lanterns and put them in the pudding pies.' This was also repeated to me by another baker, Mr W Course.

Miss Ruth Fowler, herself, quotes a story that gives a quaint, medieval flavour to their peculiar character—a King was journeying from Woodstock to Banbury through Deddington. At Woodstock they gave him gloves and at Banbury light cakes, but in Deddington something between the two, like leather but to be eaten.

Actually they contain a sort of glorified bread pudding in a very hard case. Miss Fowler told me that the outer crust has suet as an ingredient, this is filled with boiled plum pudding, the whole being afterwards baked. Once all the bakers here made them and they were sold at the Stalls. Boiled and baked like Simnel cakes, but with what a different result!

The Watchman had no sooner cried 'four o'clock in the morning' than the town band started off to parade all round. It must have paused here and there to play like the Waits, for Mr Tom Deeley, many years a carrier, whose memory goes back to the eighteen sixties, remembers music under his parents' windows at 5am and the wild feelings of excited, joyous anticipation it aroused. In the afternoon the band perambulated the town once more.

Leggings and winter clothing were purchased as a matter of course at this late November fair, and the stalls stretched from what was formerly Chisletts' Corner—now known as Smith's Corner; that is, along the Market Place to the house called the Hermitage. The stalls and



It would seem that no photos survive of the Pudding Pie Fair, but I am grateful to Barry Davis for this photo of the next best thing—the Deddington Flower Show in 1923.

booths had to keep strictly to that side for the middle of the square was full of pigs. Sheep thronged the portion of the market place which still bears the name of the Bull Ring, and they extended right along our present 'Victoria Terrace', called then Hoof Lane, to where the pound was at Earl's Farm.

From opposite the King's Arms, stretching across the Oxford-Banbury highway to some distance up the Hempton Road, there were sometimes as many as from six to seven hundred horses. That has been 'the Horse Fair' from time immemorial, and iron rings for tethering are affixed here and there in the stone walls, as well as, formerly, posts at intervals with holes through which to pass the rope which secured the halters. That address proper ends at the police station corner and drovers no longer need space beyond.

Horned cattle were displayed all down the High Street, and one marvels to think that human ears amid the uproar could have heard the town band when it went round again in the afternoon.

Did you know?

A son of Deddington was the founder of one of the three foundation families of New Zealand. His name was Joseph Matthews and he was born in Deddington. He lived in Philcote Street or Queen Street (I don't know where that is). He was born in 1808 to William and Isabella Matthews.

He sailed to New Zealand with a missionary party in 1830 and married the daughter of English emigrants, Mary Anne Davis, who spoke fluent Maori. They opened a mission school together. Joseph's brother Richard, born in 1811, wanted to join his brother and sailed on the *Beagle*, with Charles Darwin in the mid-1830s.

New Zealanders today are proud to be descended from one of the three foundation families. I have had requests from two different branches of the Matthews family for Deddington information.

Unfortunately, no one has offered my (1st class, of course) fare to New Zealand to give a report in person.

Moira Byast

If undelivered please return to: Deddington & District History Society, c/o 37 Gaveston Gardens, Deddington OX15 0NX. 224 is the newsletter of the Deddington & District History Society, published three times a year and distributed free to members.

The Society meets on the second Wednesday of the month during the season, normally at the Windmill Centre in Deddington. Membership £8/14 pa single/couples, or £3 per meeting at the door.

Editorial address: 1 South Newington Road, Barford St Michael, OX15 0RJ. e-mail: c.cohen@europe.com

