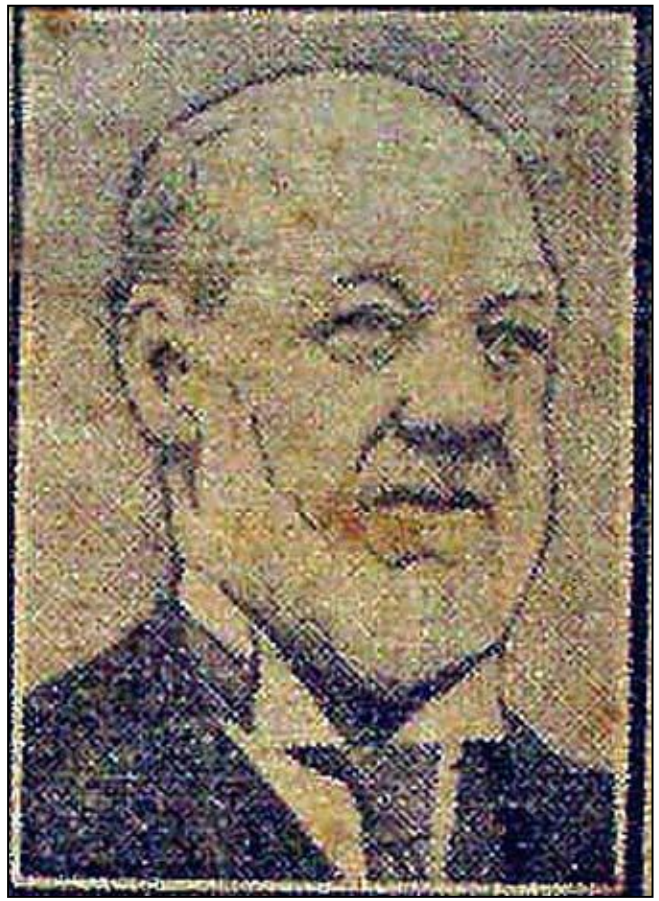
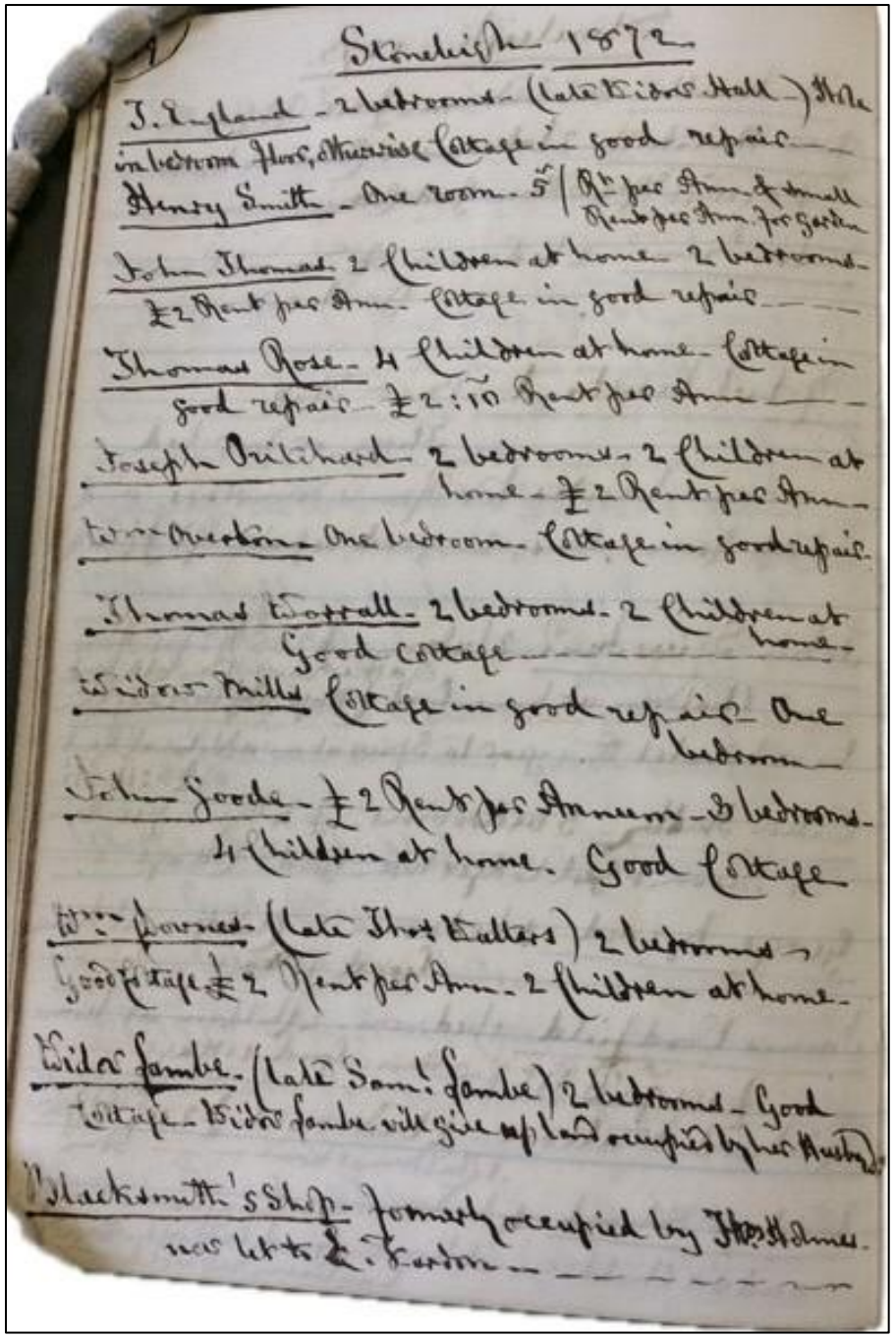
Edward Langley Fardon

December 11th 1839-
February 9th 1926



Edward as a young man and in his later years

- Born in Leamington on December 11th 1839
- Employed by fine metal worker Francis Skidmore in 1857
- Worked in Switzerland and France 1860-1861, including for Baron Rothschild
- Moved to Kenilworth after 1865 and took over late father’s business
- And then…



Stoneleigh 1872

J. England - 2 bedrooms - (late Widow Hall) Wants in bedroom floor, otherwise Cottage in good repair

Henry Smith - One room - 5s / Rt per Ann & small Rent per Ann for Garden

John Thomas 2 Children at home 2 bedrooms - £2 Rent per Ann - Cottage in good repair

Thomas Rose - 4 Children at home - Cottage in good repair - £2:10 Rent per Ann

Joseph Critchard - 2 bedrooms - 2 Children at home - £2 Rent per Ann -

Wm Overton - One bedroom - Cottage in good repair

Thomas Wotrall - 2 bedrooms - 2 Children at home - Good Cottage

Widow Mills Cottage in good repair - One bedroom

John Goode - £2 Rent per Annum - 3 bedrooms - 4 Children at home. Good Cottage

Wm Jones (late Thos Walters) 2 bedrooms - Good Cottage £2 Rent per Ann - 2 Children at home.

Widow Lambe (late Saml Lambe) 2 bedrooms - Good Cottage - Widow Lambe will give up Land occupied by her Husband.

Blacksmith's Shop - formerly occupied by Thos Adams was let to E. Easton

An extract from Lord Leigh's "repairs"notebook of 1872 shows Edward is already leasing the "blacksmith's shop"

1870-74	**blacksmith and whitesmith at Castle End, Kenilworth**
1874	move to Stoneleigh
1876-80	shoeing and general smith, wheelwright
1881	master blacksmith at 2 Church Place, Stoneleigh, employing 2 men and one apprentice
1884-1900	business described variously as ironmonger, engineer, machinist, general smith. Still at 2 Church Place, Stoneleigh
1901	heating engineer and iron worker at 2 Church Place, Stoneleigh
1904-1924	as Edward Fardon & Son, ironmongers and engineers
1911	heating engineer and art metal worker iron gates and general ornamental ironlink(sic) at Stoneleigh

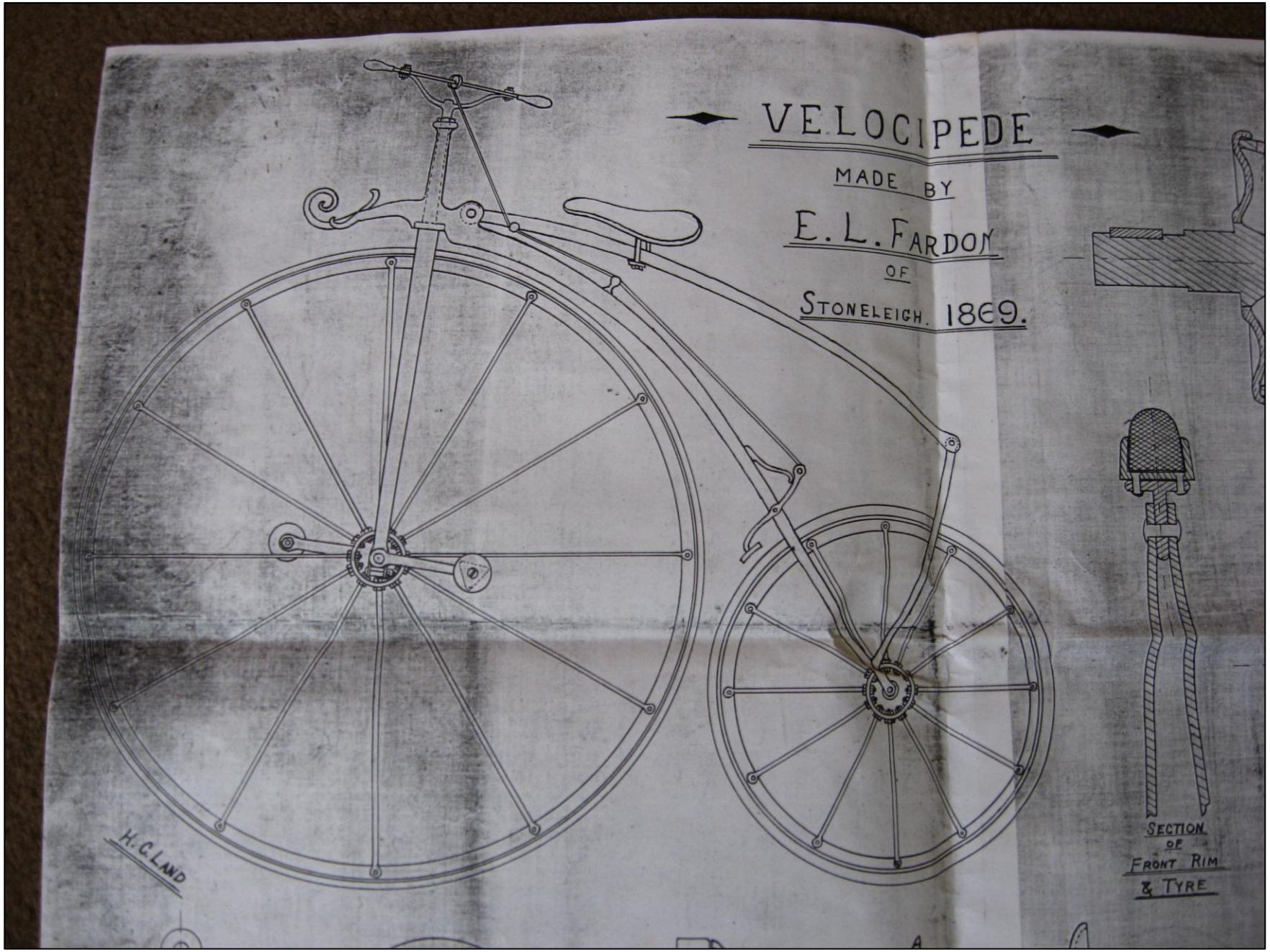
An early picture of Church Lane, with Mr Fardon’s house on the right

The Fardon family outside 2 Church Place

The house today, with ornamental ironwork

Examples of his ornamental designs

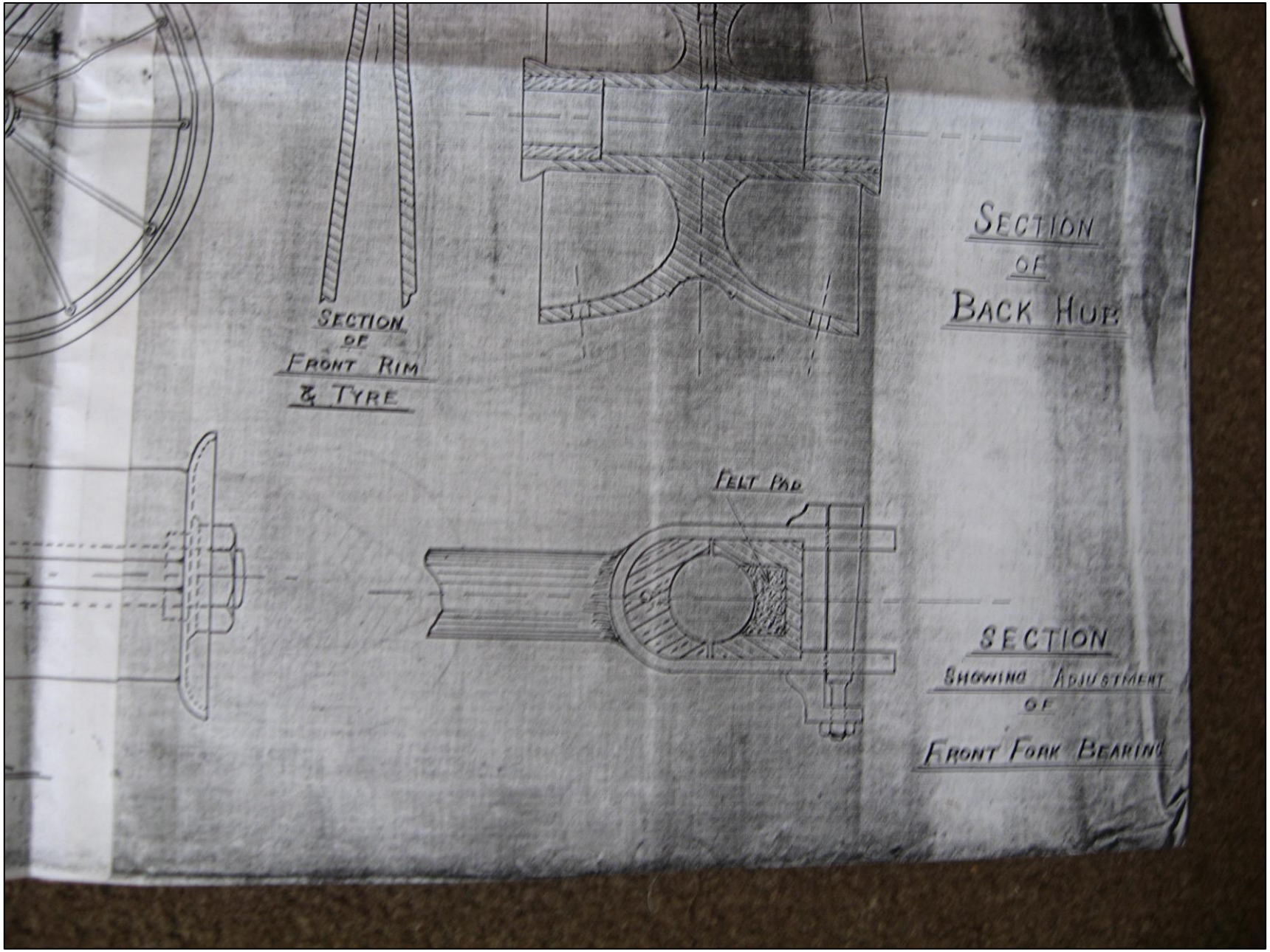
Stoneleigh Abbey gates

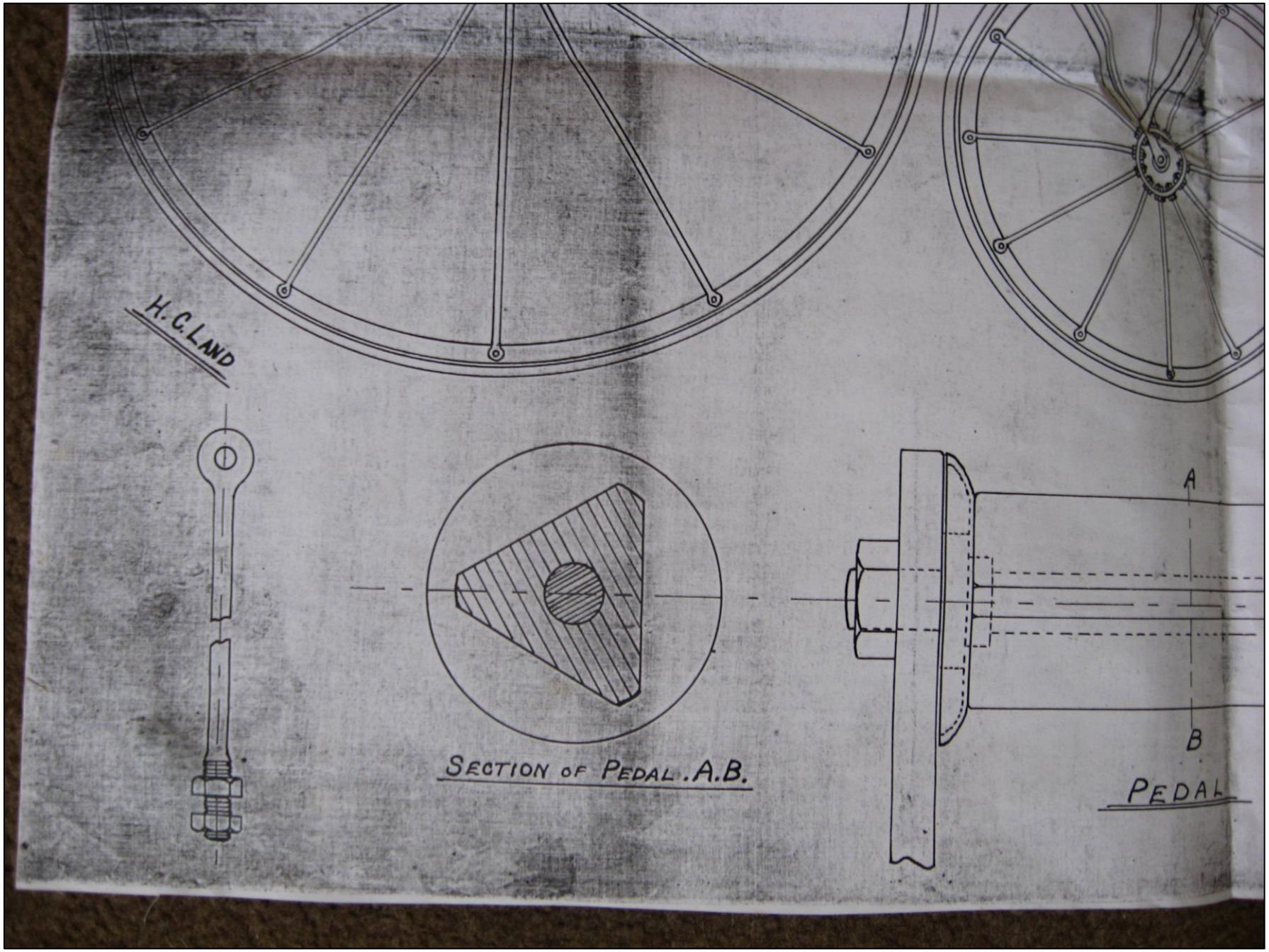


The velocipede design

Note date, Stoneleigh

1869


SECTION
OF
FRONT RIM
& TYRE
SECTION
OF
BACK HUB
FELT PAD
SECTION
SHOWING ADJUSTMENT
OF
FRONT FORK BEARING

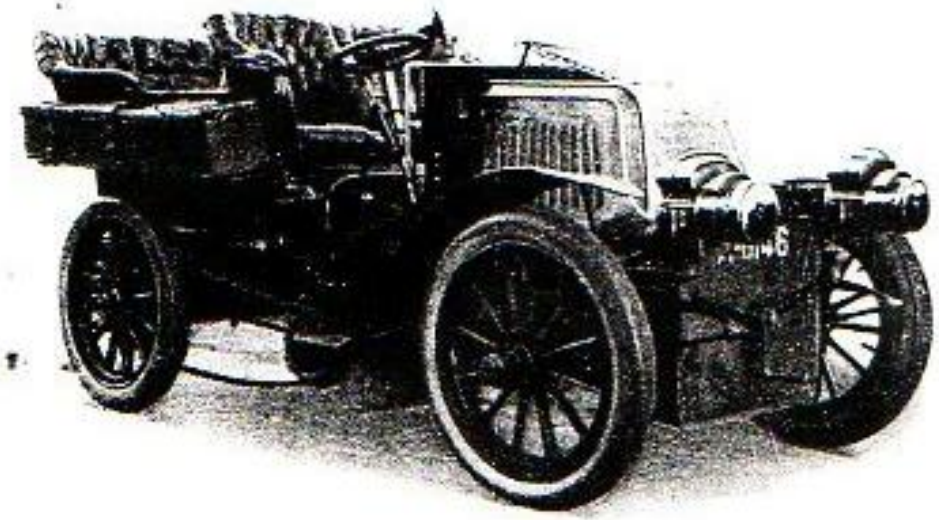

H. C. LAND
A
B
SECTION OF PEDAL . A.B.
PEDAL

Miss L. Prime

IN ACCOUNT WITH

EDWARD FARDON,

MOTOR ENGINEER AND AGENT.



Ten years practical experience in the largest Coventry Works.

Repairs to any make of motor cars.

A trial solicited, satisfaction guaranteed.

Petrol, Lubricating Oil, and Spare Parts.

		£	s	d
1910				
May 19th	1 - No 12 Model Lady's Humber Cycle			
	25" Frame Warwick tyres	"	"	"

Edward at his mother’s grave

MR. E. L. FARDON DEAD

A WELL-KNOWN FIGURE AT STONELEIGH.

PIONEER OF THE BICYCLE.

The death took place at his residence in Stoneleigh village, late on Tuesday night, of Mr. Edward Langley Fardon, the bicycle pioneer. Mr. Fardon, who was 86 years of age, was about the house in his usual health until a few weeks ago, when he became ill and rapidly grew very weak. During his illness, Lord Leigh made regular inquiries as to his health.

Mr. Fardon's ancestors came into Warwickshire from the Gloucestershire hills early in the 19th century, and were connected with the Stoneleigh estate as workmen. Edward was born at Leamington, in which town his father had a whitesmith's shop, on December 11, 1839. There was subsequently a removal to Kenilworth, where Mr. Fardon's father died in 1865. The subject of the present notice worked at home till 1857, and then took employment at Skidmore's, in Coventry. He next entered upon a kind of Dick Whittington enterprise and walked to London town, doing the journey in four-and-a-half days He worked in a street off Cheapside.

Extract from newspaper obituary 1926

"Took employment at Skidmore's in Coventry… he next entered upon a kind of Dick Whittington enterprise and walked to London, doing the journey in four and a half days. He worked in a street off Cheapside"

Mr. Fardon claimed to have played an important part in the development of the bicycle in the form in which it is manufactured today. The evolution of the cycle from the hobby horse or boneshaker to the lightness, perfection, and strength of the modern machine forms a fascinating chapter in the development of methods of locomotion, and among the revolutionary improvements which were introduced from time to time, two of the most important were the suspension wheel, better known as the spider wheel, and the use of rubber tyres. Mr. Fardon is said to have made the original suspension wheel, and the first entirely iron cycle which was provided with an indiarubber tyre.

In an interview with "The Coventry Herald" some years ago Mr. Fardon gave some particulars concerning the machine he made in 1868-9, which introduced such revolutionary ideas, the drawings of which he said were still in existence. While abroad he had seen a hobby horse and several four-wheeled cycles in Paris. These were made of wood.

"The great thing was (said Mr. Fardon to the interviewer) I did not like the principle of the wheels. I had an idea that they should be in a state of suspension, and that the spokes should be in tension, not under compression."

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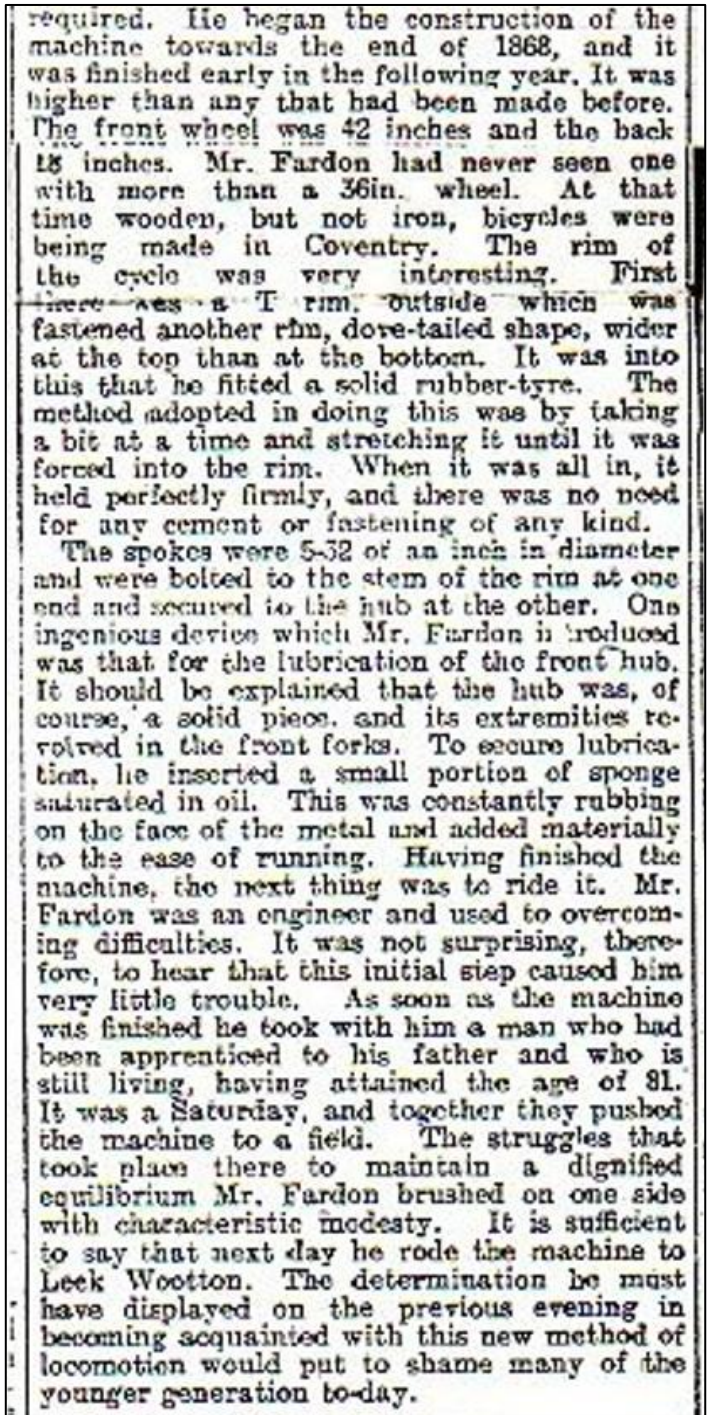

required. He began the construction of the machine towards the end of 1868, and it was finished early in the following year. It was higher than any that had been made before. The front wheel was 42 inches and the back 18 inches. Mr. Fardon had never seen one with more than a 36in. wheel. At that time wooden, but not iron, bicycles were being made in Coventry. The rim of the cycle was very interesting. First there was a T rim, outside which was fastened another rim, dove-tailed shape, wider at the top than at the bottom. It was into this that he fitted a solid rubber-tyre. The method adopted in doing this was by taking a bit at a time and stretching it until it was forced into the rim. When it was all in, it held perfectly firmly, and there was no need for any cement or fastening of any kind.

The spokes were 5-32 of an inch in diameter and were bolted to the stem of the rim at one end and secured to the hub at the other. One ingenious device which Mr. Fardon introduced was that for the lubrication of the front hub. It should be explained that the hub was, of course, a solid piece, and its extremities revolved in the front forks. To secure lubrication, he inserted a small portion of sponge saturated in oil. This was constantly rubbing on the face of the metal and added materially to the ease of running. Having finished the machine, the next thing was to ride it. Mr. Fardon was an engineer and used to overcoming difficulties. It was not surprising, therefore, to hear that this initial step caused him very little trouble. As soon as the machine was finished he took with him a man who had been apprenticed to his father and who is still living, having attained the age of 81. It was a Saturday, and together they pushed the machine to a field. The struggles that took place there to maintain a dignified equilibrium Mr. Fardon brushed on one side with characteristic modesty. It is sufficient to say that next day he rode the machine to Leek Wootton. The determination he must have displayed on the previous evening in becoming acquainted with this new method of locomotion would put to shame many of the younger generation to-day.

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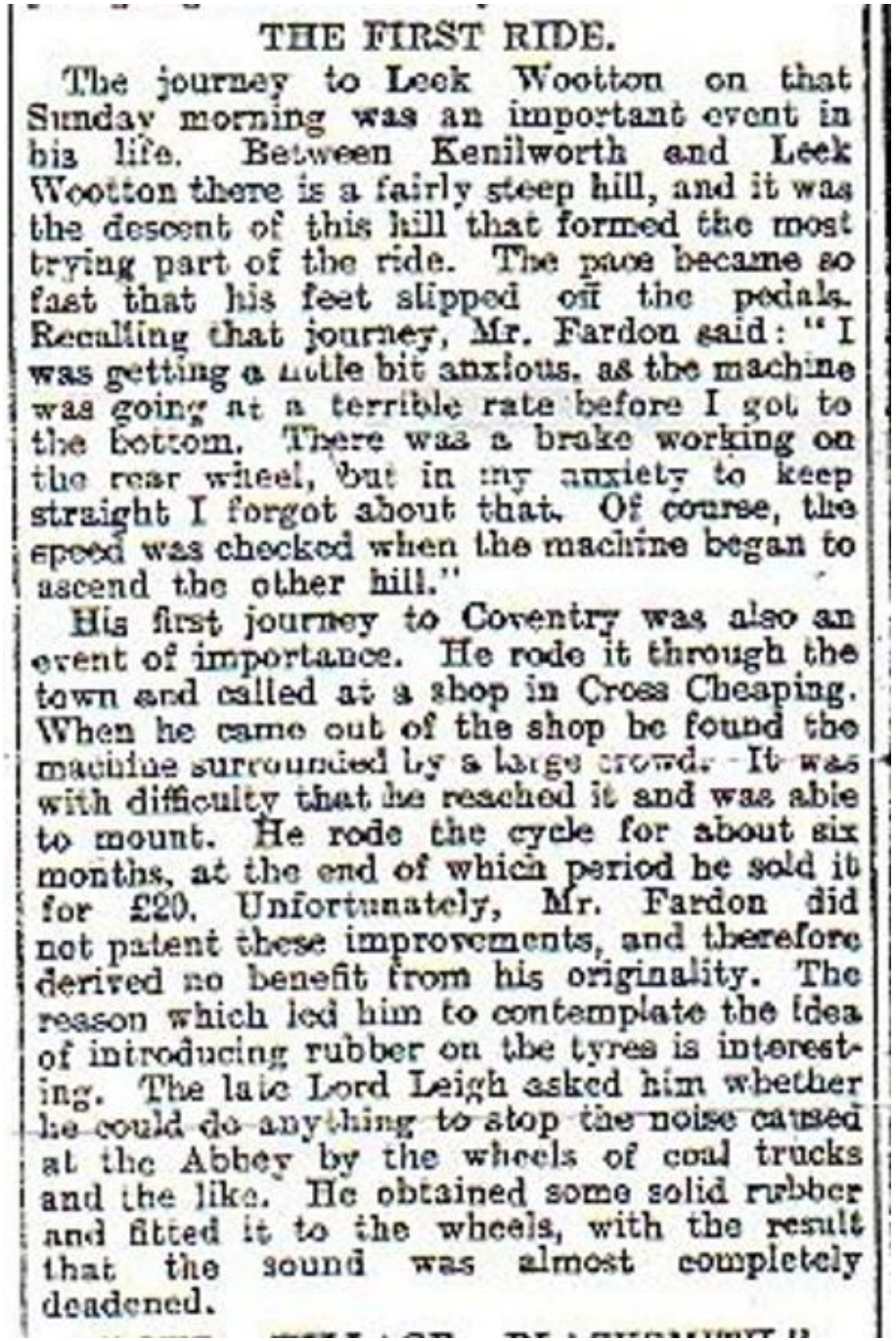

THE FIRST RIDE.

The journey to Leek Wootton on that Sunday morning was an important event in his life. Between Kenilworth and Leek Wootton there is a fairly steep hill, and it was the descent of this hill that formed the most trying part of the ride. The pace became so fast that his feet slipped off the pedals. Recalling that journey, Mr. Fardon said: "I was getting a little bit anxious, as the machine was going at a terrible rate before I got to the bottom. There was a brake working on the rear wheel, but in my anxiety to keep straight I forgot about that. Of course, the speed was checked when the machine began to ascend the other hill."

His first journey to Coventry was also an event of importance. He rode it through the town and called at a shop in Cross Cheaping. When he came out of the shop he found the machine surrounded by a large crowd. It was with difficulty that he reached it and was able to mount. He rode the cycle for about six months, at the end of which period he sold it for £20. Unfortunately, Mr. Fardon did not patent these improvements, and therefore derived no benefit from his originality. The reason which led him to contemplate the idea of introducing rubber on the tyres is interesting. The late Lord Leigh asked him whether he could do anything to stop the noise caused at the Abbey by the wheels of coal trucks and the like. He obtained some solid rubber and fitted it to the wheels, with the result that the sound was almost completely deadened.

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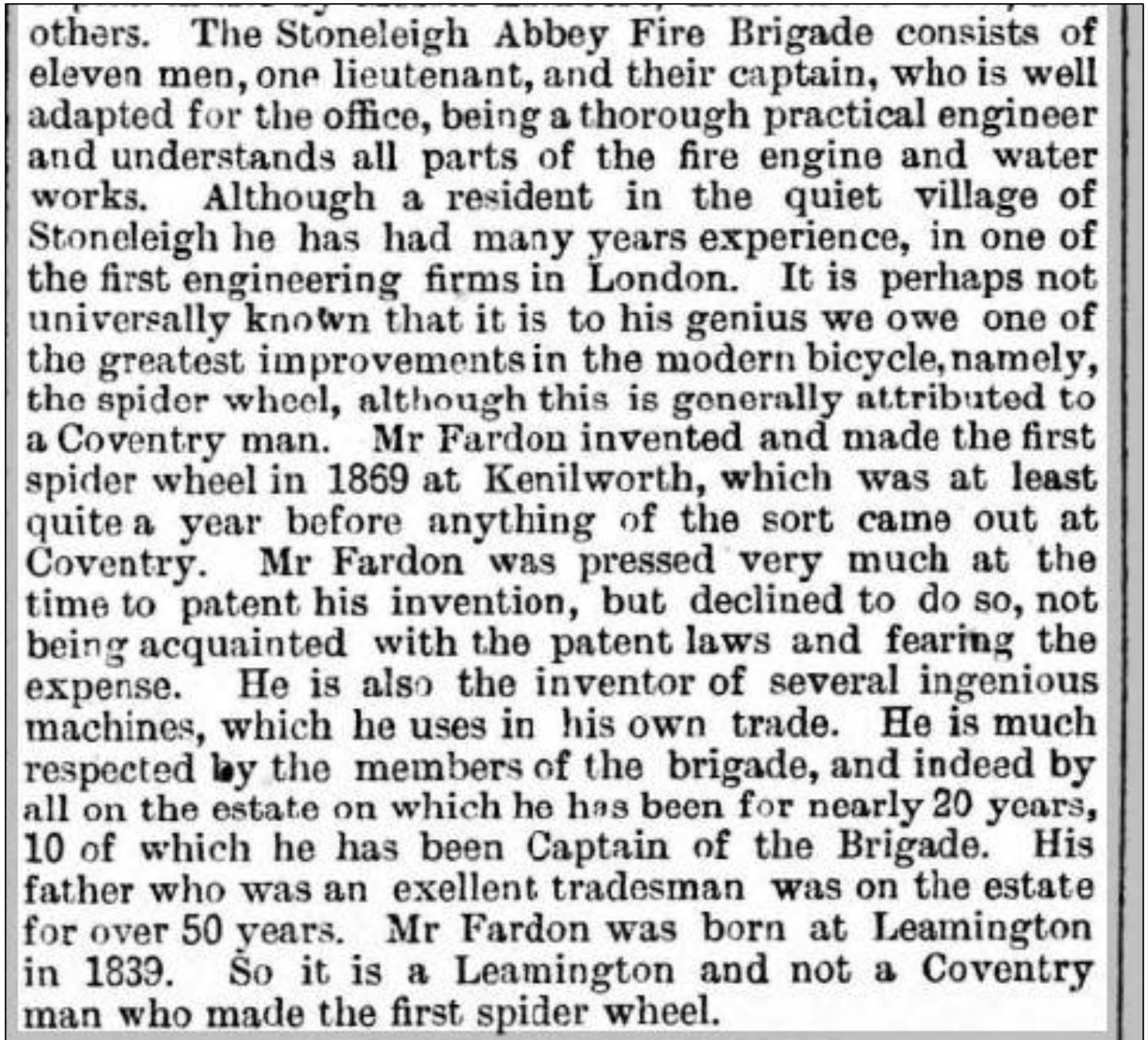

others. The Stoneleigh Abbey Fire Brigade consists of eleven men, one lieutenant, and their captain, who is well adapted for the office, being a thorough practical engineer and understands all parts of the fire engine and water works. Although a resident in the quiet village of Stoneleigh he has had many years experience, in one of the first engineering firms in London. It is perhaps not universally known that it is to his genius we owe one of the greatest improvements in the modern bicycle, namely, the spider wheel, although this is generally attributed to a Coventry man. Mr Fardon invented and made the first spider wheel in 1869 at Kenilworth, which was at least quite a year before anything of the sort came out at Coventry. Mr Fardon was pressed very much at the time to patent his invention, but declined to do so, not being acquainted with the patent laws and fearing the expense. He is also the inventor of several ingenious machines, which he uses in his own trade. He is much respected by the members of the brigade, and indeed by all on the estate on which he has been for nearly 20 years, 10 of which he has been Captain of the Brigade. His father who was an exellent tradesman was on the estate for over 50 years. Mr Fardon was born at Leamington in 1839. So it is a Leamington and not a Coventry man who made the first spider wheel.

Captain of the Stoneleigh Fire Brigade

"it is to his genius we owe one of the greatest improvements in the modern bicycle, namely, the spider wheel, although it is generally attributed to a Coventry man...

The family graves in Stoneleigh churchyard


STONELEIGH

The forge today

Installation of commemorative plaque December 8th 2024

With grateful thanks to various members of the Fardon family for permission to use materials in this display