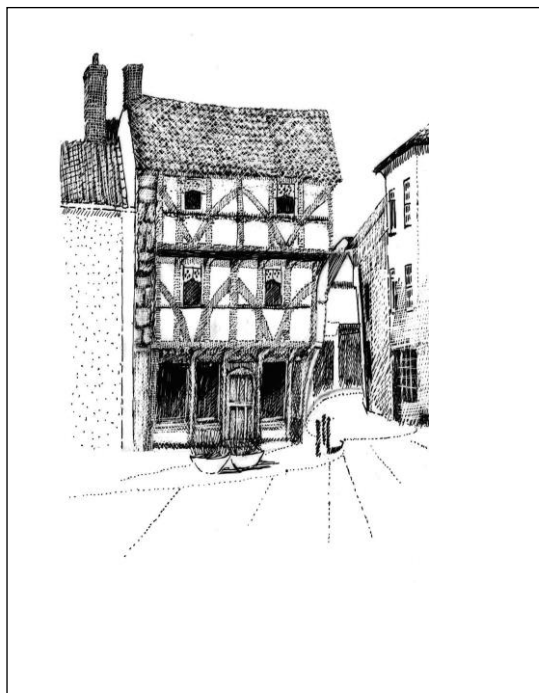


Issue No 3

June 2023

Retrospect

Newsletter
of
The Friends of King John's Hunting Lodge



News, Views and Events

Museum charity no.

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Welcome to the third edition of Retrospect and welcome to all the new members who have recently joined and thank you for your support which is greatly appreciated by the Museum Trust. We look forward to seeing you at our future events. Just a reminder we have 2 events planned for June. Wednesday 21st June a private tour of Aston Windmill and Sunday 25th June Axbridge Maces and 400 year celebration, details in our programme of events below.

Last month's Retrospect invited contributions to make this newsletter lively and interesting. Thank you, Margaret Jordan, for being the first to respond as below .Please continue to send all contributions, preferably in Calibri (Body) 12 point, to Liz Scott at:

Moorlandfm@btinternet.com

The talk by John on Peter Wickens Fry was very well attended and enjoyed in the beautiful House and Gardens of his birth place Compton House. We are encouraged by the attendance at our meetings and have some interesting events lined up, dates for your diary as follows below . If anyone has any ideas or topics they would like us to include in the future please let me know.

Liz Scott June 2023

BY COACH TO CROSS

I recently gave a talk about how Cross became an important destination for coach travellers in the 18th and 19th centuries. One question I was asked was - how did one go about getting a ticket for a coach? The answer is of course that tickets were purchased from coach proprietors. These were often inn keepers but later some booking offices were opened in towns and cities. However, booking office contractors were often at the mercy of the innkeepers on their routes because the inn keepers had to be paid for the supply of horses. The working life of these animals depended on the length and difficulty of the route and for that reason were replaced regularly, usually after a run of some twenty miles, with a fresh team.

However, the question caused me to think again about the quite remarkable fact that the small village of Cross was at one time busy with coaches travelling from Bristol to Bridgwater and Exeter and back and that they were served by as many as three inns.

As early as 1648 there was at least one inn on the main road in Cross, the King's Arms, but later there were two others, the New Inn and the White Hart. All were known to be stopping places for coaches. The Duke of Wellington coach is known to have called at the White Hart and the Kings Arms boasted that The Royal Mail, known for its speed and good time keeping, stopped there at 'a quarter before 12 noon'. The King's Arms ceased to be an inn in the 19th century and became Manor Farm. Its decline was possibly associated with the coming of the railway at around that time.

Only a few wealthy people had a coach or carriage. Most people would have chosen to ride a horse. Those without their own carriage could hire a carriage driven by a hired man. This hired man could be a driver on the box or a postillion on the near side horse. This would

explain the large stabling that was known to be attached to both the Kings Arms and the New Inn in Cross

However, the main reason that prevented greater numbers travelling was the deplorable state of the roads in Britain. When the Romans left Britain, the roads declined, and little maintenance was carried out until men like Telford and McAdam began looking for ways to improve the roads across the country. In 1799 the Bristol Turnpike Trust was set up and was at the time the most extensive road organisation in England maintaining nearly 100 miles of roads.

Three roads from Bristol reached to the Mendips and the most important of these was the Bridgwater Road. The construction of these roads also brought the mile markers that we see today along the A38. They are a historic reminder of these old roads and the importance of Cross to travellers as the miles to the village can be seen clearly marked. By 1828 John Rutter was writing of Cross as being on the great thoroughfare from Bristol to Bridgwater and "has several considerable posting houses and inns; at which the mail and several coaches stop to change horses and afford refreshment to passengers".

At that time all coaches travelled through Cross hence the modern name of the road through the village is the Old Coach Road. But why was the village of Cross in particular the favoured destination for these coaches over all others along the route?

It was important enough to have had three busy inns and records show that there were blacksmiths, wheelwrights and other trades that served the coaching trade. I think the answer is its situation at the bottom of Shute Shelve. Any coach arriving from Bristol, some twenty miles away, would have tired horses that would have been put to extra strain 'breaking' the vehicle down the hill. Any coach travelling north from Bridgwater would need fresh horses to pull the coach up that same hill. While the horses were changed the inns were only too ready to provide refreshment for weary travellers. Because of its position, Cross became the 'service station' of its time.

Margaret Jordan

Programme

Wednesday June 21st

Ashton Windmill. *A private tour of this local landmark.* Led by David & Madeleine Roberts.

Venue: Meet at the Windmill at 2.30pm.

The Mill is very small so the number that can go round at any one time is limited. If necessary, there will be a second viewing at 3.30 pm. Please ring Liz Scott on 01934 733341 to book your place. The requested donation to Ashton Windmill is £2.00.

Please note that access to the upper floors of the Mill entails climbing ladders. Full details of safety factors are available from the leaders. roberts.dandm@gmail.com

Sunday June 25th

Axbridge Town Hall 2pm

An event to mark the 400 year celebration of the James I Charter and the Axbridge Maces.

Local historian
John Page
explains the
Axbridge
Maces 2.30pm
Town Hall

See the
Axbridge Maces
displayed in
their new
cabinet. 3.30pm
Hunting Lodge

Detail from
James I Charter

Royal Seal on the
top of the mace

The Axbridge Maces
400 Year Anniversary!
25th June 2.00pm Town Hall
Free of charge for all
(Space is limited - Light refreshments at 4.00pm - Town Hall)

19th July TBC

Visit to Avalon Marshes and Centre

We are organising a private Active Discovery Tour which commences at 11.30am and lasts an hour. Full details of what can be seen at Avalon Marshes can be found on Avalon Archaeology website in addition to the tour. Please let me know if you are interested in coming along as we require a minimum of 8 people to join the tour.

August: There will be no meeting in August.

Wednesday September 20th

George Cumberland – the story of a gentleman farmer in Axbridge in the 19th century.

Speaker: Jane Evans.

An opportunity to meet Jane and to purchase a copy of her book:

GEORGE CUMBERLAND - FARMING- FAMILY- FOSSILS

Venue: Cross Memorial Hall at 2.00pm

Wednesday October 18th.

The Strawberry Line Past, Present and Future.

Speaker: Lois Brenchley

Venue: Cross Memorial Hall at 2.00 pm

Wednesday November 15th

Our Sacred Spaces

Speakers: Sue and Phil Thorne.

Venue: Cross Memorial Hall at 7.00 for 7.30 pm

Friday December 8th

7.00pm Christmas Social. Dinner at The Lamb at Weare.

Details and menus to follow.

May's Event

PETER WICKENS FRY (1795-1860)

photographer and solicitor

At the May meeting of The Friends of King John's Hunting Lodge, John Page delivered a fascinating account of the life of Peter Wickens Fry and outlined his contribution to the development of photography and the founding of the Royal Photographic Society.

Fittingly, the meeting was held in Compton House, Axbridge by kind permission of the current owner, Patricia Tallack. Peter Wickens Fry was born in Compton House in 1795, the son of Peter Fry and Joanna Chapman. At that time, Compton House and much of the western part of Axbridge lay in the parish of Compton Bishop.

Peter Wickens Fry trained as a solicitor and moved to London. In the 1840s, he developed a keen interest in the emerging art of photography. He had apparently experimented with photogenic drawing before Henry Fox Talbot developed the calotype process in 1841. Later experimentation was with the daguerreotype method. Fry's interest in photography led to his election in 1845 to the Society of Arts. Eager to pursue his interest in technical developments in photography, Fry established the Calotype Club in 1847. This Club met at Fry's home in Montague St. In 1848, the Club was renamed The Royal Photographic Club. Fry collaborated with many of the leading mid-Victorian pioneers of photography including Archer and Fenton. With Fry's encouragement, Fenton was instrumental in setting up the Royal Photographic Society in 1853. Fry remained on the Council of the Society until ill health forced him to resign his seat shortly before his death.

Fry remained an innovative photographer and his work can be found in collections across the world, notably in the Harry Ransom Centre in Texas.

Although Fry's principal interest was in photography, he was also a distinguished lawyer, practising in Cheapside and becoming Commissioner for Oaths in Chancery. He also served as Director of the Legal and Commercial Life Assurance Society. Towards the end of his career, Fry appeared as the solicitor for James Henderson in the court case known as Talbot vs Henderson, a case turning on the alleged infringement of rights claimed by Talbot in respect of his calotype patent. Fry won the case and obtained compensation amounting to £330 for his client.

John's talk succinctly explained the intricacies of the various types of photographic methods developed by Fry and his contemporaries. It became clear that photography, both as a technical process and as an art form, owes a great deal to Fry.

In his personal life, Fry married Jane Loxley (1794-1828) and later her sister, Ann Loxley (1805-1862). There was one child, Jane Anna Fry (1827-1903). Peter Wickens Fry died on 27 August 1860 at his home in Montague St. London. He is buried in a family vault in Highgate Cemetery.

It was entirely appropriate that this talk took place in Fry's birthplace, now an elegant hotel with a lovely, relaxing garden. Members and guests enjoyed the calm ambience of the setting, as well as the nibbles and a glass of wine. In all, it was a delightful evening.

David Roberts

May 2023

Other News and Events.



Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Programme for June

Wednesday 21st June at 7.30

Farming Southern Exmoor Talk

Details from the SANHS office as above.