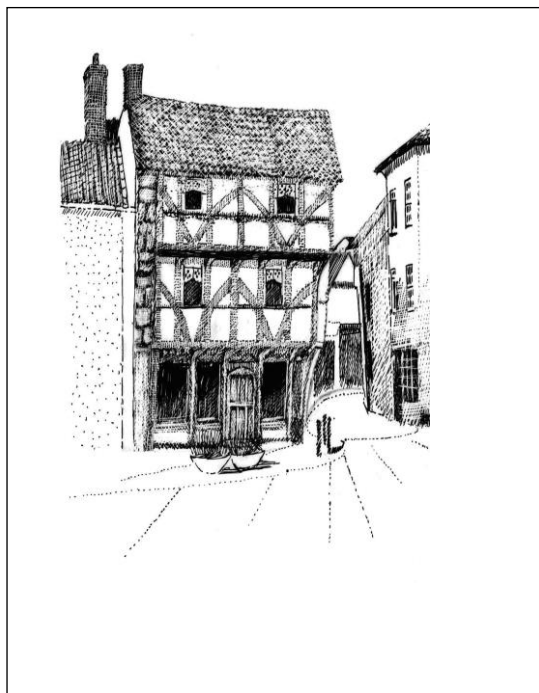


Issue No 4

July & August 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 4th Edition of Retrospect. June was busy month with a tour of the Aston Windmill and the celebration of the 400 year Anniversary of the James 1 Charter and Axbridge Maces, please see reports within.

We have a Tour booked at Avalon Marshes in July, details below, an interesting place to visit with a variety of things to see and do outside of the Tour . If you are interested in going can you let me know as soon as possible moorlandfm@btinternet.com or 01934733341. We have a break in August, but dates for your diary September to December are also included.

Thank you to Joan and Margaret for this month's contributions. I would be pleased to have any contributions for our next edition and suggestions for talks in 2024 are also welcome.

Liz Scott

Programme

19th July 11.30 am. (Tour start time)

Avalon Archaeology Discovery Tour

The charge per person will be £6.50 but a concessionary rate of £4.50 is available for over 60-year-olds, those on benefits and students. Card payments only on the day are taken at the start of the tour.

The details of the tour.

Avalon Archaeology is a lovingly crafted reproduction of Somerset's heritage in the heart of the Avalon Marshes. It has been hand built by a dedicated group of volunteers using traditional techniques.

With our guide we'll explore an Iron Age roundhouse under construction, a richly decorated reconstructed Roman dining-room, an Anglo-Saxon longhall, as well as a waterline replica of a Viking ship. Filled with handcrafted furniture and art, you will immerse yourself in thousands of years of heritage and discover the detective work behind its recreation.

Part of the tour will take place outside, so dress appropriately for the weather. The tour will last for approximately 1.5 hours and you will have time to enjoy the site at your own pace. You can use this time to visit the world's oldest excavation hut and watch short films on local archaeology in the Bulleid and Gray Cinema.

What's nearby.

After your visit, you can make use of the Avalon Marshes Centre and Marshes Hub Tea Stop café or visit the Somerset Crafts gallery. You can also journey onto Shapwick Heath National Nature Reserve and see replica wooden prehistoric trackways.

Dogs

Unfortunately, they do not allow dogs into the site except for assistance dogs. Dogs are welcome in the wider Avalon Marshes Centre and must be kept on a short lead at all times.

Please note that dogs are not allowed on the main area of Shapwick Heath, which is the closest nature reserve to the site.

Accessibility

The reconstructed buildings are accessible but feature some uneven gravel surfaces and narrow spaces that may make turning in larger electric wheelchairs difficult. A manual wheelchair is available on site for visitors to loan if there are issues. Generally, light levels may be lower than you may be used to in modern buildings, and visitors are welcome to use a torch.

Directions

Avalon Archaeology can be found within the Avalon Marshes Centre on the Somerset Levels. The entrance is on Shapwick Road between Shapwick and Westhay. The nearest bus stop is a 15-minute walk from the site at Westhay and is served by the 668 service.

Address: Avalon Marshes Centre, Shapwick Road, Westhay, Somerset, BA6 9TT

Parking

Parking at the Avalon Marshes Centre is free, but visitors are encouraged to make a voluntary donation to help support its upkeep. Suggested donation for 1 hour is £1.50 and £3 for all day and payments can be made via mobile phone or cash via donation boxes in the café or gallery.

Walking & Cycling

The Bittern Trail is a walking and cycling link between Glastonbury and the site. It runs through the centre of Shapwick Heath and Ham Wall nature reserves. Route 3 of the National Cycle Network runs through the Avalon Marshes connecting Wells, Glastonbury, Bridgwater and Taunton. Route 33 provides a link with Highbridge Station and Route 26 links with Castle Cary Station. The Avalon Marshes Centre has bike racks.

More information

Please contact avalon@swheritage.org.uk if you want to discuss special requirements. Go to www.avalonarchaeology.org.uk for more details or visit the blog to see the latest work of dedicated volunteers at <https://avalon-archaeology.com/>.

August: There will be no meeting in August.

Wednesday September 20th

George Cumberland – the story of a gentleman farmer and polymath 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 7.30 pm

Friday December 8th

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

Details and menus to follow.

Other Events.



Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society Programme for July.

Saturday 8th July at 10.30am

Dunkerswell Airfield. Guided Tour

Meet in the cafe at 10.30 am. The tour starts at 11am. Tea/Coffee available in the café.

Suitable for all.

£15 minimum donation.

Booking essential. Please contact SANHS office: office@sanhs.org

June's Events

VISIT TO ASHTON WINDMILL Wed 21st June



Ashton Windmill

Seven of us assembled at the windmill where we were welcomed by Madeleine and David Roberts who have been involved with the site for many years and made our visit most worthwhile.

David summarised the history of the mill, which is located on high ground on the 'Isle of Wedmore' ridge at Chapel Allerton where it receives the prevailing south-west and west winds. The first reference to a mill was 1317 and in the 15th century it had connections with the manor of Allerton. It was probably originally a post mill but was later replaced by a tower mill. By the mid-16th century, it was rebuilt by a wealthy clothier from Wells and by the mid-17th century it was again listed as part of the manor. In 1705 the Dean and Chapter of Wells appointed John Paine as owner after which it became separated from the manor.

The present mill is thought to have been built between 1766 and 1774 although ownership at that time is not known. Other millers followed until John Stephens took over in 1887. He learnt his trade at Moorlinch Mill and in 1900 he refurbished and modified Ashton Mill using machinery from the mill at Moorlinch which was being demolished. The thatched roof was

reframed and replaced with corrugated iron, large storage bins were installed below the cap and the pair of millstones was moved down one floor.

The windmill became disused in 1927 due to the introduction of larger steam-powered mills in the district; for a while Ashton Mill used a portable engine and belt drive, so the wind-driven gear was no longer required. It stood idle for over 30 years, although it was a Home Guard Post during WW2.

In 1958 the mill was restored by the owner Mr C. C. Clark of Stone Allerton. The stonework was repaired by W.J Dennis & Sons from Westbury-sub-Mendip and the roof, new doors and sails by John Scourse & Sons of Cheddar.

After Mr Clark's death the mill was given to Bristol Museum. Negotiations with Chapel Allerton Parish Council and Sedgemoor District Council resulted in a full restoration, and it opened to the public in 1980. Sedgemoor District council acquired the mill in 1981 and it has now passed to Somerset Council.

Madeleine then took us on a tour of the mill (but here I must apologise for my description of the various pieces of machinery – lots of wheels and cogs which I only understood when reading the guidebook later). The miller controlled the turning of the sails depending on the direction of the wind, using a pulley wheel and a winding chain on the outside of the building. We then climbed up wooden ladders inside to the 3rd floor where the mechanism for turning the cap could be seen and where the miller controlled the sack hoist and filled the storage bins.

On the 2nd floor were the grain and bean storage bins, the upright shaft, crown wheel and sack hoist drive which lifted the sacks of grain or beans up through trap doors between the floors.

The 1st floor has a loading door and the millstones which are four feet in diameter and made of cement composite. For the last 20 years that Ashton windmill was working it mainly ground corn for animal feed. The corn came down a wooden chute from the bin on the floor above, into a hopper and a 'shoe' channelled it into the centre of the stones. The lower bedstone was stationary while the upper running stone was turned by the machinery on the ground floor. The resulting flour then passed down a chute into sacks on the ground floor.

On the ground floor is the base of the central wooden shaft and the wheels and cogs which control the movement of the millstones above. A governor regulates the gap between the stones to suit the wind speed and the gap could be manually adjusted by the miller to suit the grain being milled.

Interesting external features of the building are three iron bands bolted around the vertical walls of the upper part of the tower; they were fitted in 1900, probably to improve stability (the cylindrical design of Ashton Windmill may have been more likely to distort under the weight of the cap than mills built with sloping sides).

At the end of the tour there was an opportunity to buy a booklet about the mill. After reading it and perusing the excellent line drawings (which were also on display in the mill) I am looking forward to making a return visit.

Joan Goddard.



The visitors to the mill

CELEBRATION OF THE 400 YEAR ANNIVERSARY of THE AXBRIDGE MACES held on Sunday 25th June

An interesting talk by John Page was held in Axbridge Town Hall by invitation of the Town Council and Town Trust to celebrate the 400-year anniversary of the Town's Maces.

Distinguished guests included H.M. Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and his Deputy, The High Sherriff of Somerset, Mayors from Wells, Axbridge, Burnham on Sea, Bridgwater, Ilminster and Taunton, The Chairman of Somerset Council, the local Somerset Councillor, the Chairman of Cheddar Parish Council and representatives of the Axbridge Town Council and the Axbridge Town Trust. There were also over 40 members of the public in attendance.

John gave a short introduction to the Axbridge Maces which were granted to the Corporation by James 1 Charter on 25th June 1623. The original maces and the seal were on display.

John quoted from the charter as follows: -

“that the Bailiff of the Borough aforesaid and the Sergeant at the Mace for the time being shall carry and bear before the Mayor of the Borough aforesaid for the time being and his successors gilt or silver maces engraved and wrought with the sign of the arms of our heirs and successors in all places within the Borough aforesaid the Liberties and Precincts of the same “. The Royal Seal was attached.

The Maces were then processed to King John's Hunting Lodge where they will remain on display in a secure case during the open season. They can be seen during opening hours, Tuesday - Sunday 1pm to 4pm until the 31st of October. Admission is free but donations payable by cash or card are always welcome.

The Town Council now has new Wooden Maces which were hand carved by a member of the Men's Shed and are a very good replica of the original ones. The Wooden Maces are now used at Civic ceremonies.

The event was concluded by a scrumptious tea in the Town Hall and the afternoon was enjoyed by all.

Liz Scott.



Axbridge Maces in King John's Hunting Lodge



James 1st from the mace display

Views & Comments

PETER WICKENS FRY – early photographer.

After the talk given by John Page about Peter Wickens Fry (see Retrospect Issue 3) there were questions raised about whether the Axbridge Frys were related to either the well-known chocolate manufacturer or Elizabeth Fry the prison reformer.

At the Society of Genealogist in London are nine boxes of FRY records which are the work of two friends Edward Alexander Fry and George Samuel Fry. Their collaboration began in 1887 and ended with their deaths in the 1930's. These boxes, plus 32 bound volumes, contain Fry parish records, wills, pedigrees and newspaper cuttings all arranged topographically.

Piecing together our local Fry family began with the work and considerable knowledge of the late Norman Davies and his wife Mary and from this we know that the Fry family of Axbridge, Winscombe and Compton Bishop seem to have their origins in Barton a small hamlet west of Winscombe.

The surname Fry is thought to be derived from the word free. In the Custumal of Winscombe dated 1290 Adam le Frye of Barthone and John le Fryre are listed as Free tenants. The family seem to have continuous associations with Barton and Winscombe from then until the early 20th century. Their memorials decorate the interiors of Winscombe and Axbridge churches, from being yeoman farmers the family gradually acquired land and property, developing considerable business interests including shipping and the growing and importing of sugar from the West Indies and entering the legal profession and the church.

The beginning of an identifiable family line for Peter Wickens Fry starts in the 16th century with Nicholas Frye a free tenant. In his widow's will she left a cottage and pasture to her son George. George held land in Compton Bishop, Axbridge and Badgworth where he died in 1584.

By the seventeenth century, the Fry family were firmly established in Axbridge. Peter Wickens Fry was descended from this long line and was baptised in Axbridge church in 1786 one of the thirteen children of Peter Fry and Joanna nee Chapman who lived in Compton House in Axbridge.

So, as John asserted at the meeting, there is no known connection with either the Fry chocolate manufacturing family or with Elizabeth Fry the prison reformer.

Margaret Jordan