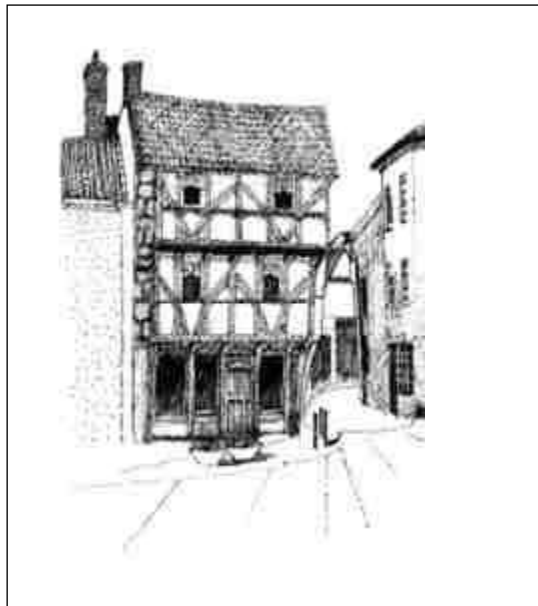


Retrospect

Issue No 22, January 2025

Newsletter of the Friends of
King John's Hunting Lodge

News, views and events



We can be nothing without you, our Friends and members of the former Axbridge Archaeological and Local History Society. We always want to hear your views, comments, and suggestions for the future, so keep them coming in – send your ideas to Liz by email at moorlandfm@btinternet.com and contributions to editor Ian Tabrett at tabrett.cross@btinternet.com

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DIARY DATES

All meetings at Cross Memorial Hall (CMH) unless otherwise stated. Free to paid-up members of Friends of King John's Hunting Lodge; visitors £5; refreshments £2 for tea/coffee and cake.

15 January: Cross Memorial Hal (CMH) 2.30pm, refreshments free! Short presentations by Friends on a variety of topics: Madeleine Roberts, Phil Thorne, Lester Durston, Fiona Torrens-Spence, and John Page.

19 February: CMH 2.30pm The SS Great Britain - Brian Aston

19 March: CMH 2.30pm Ashton and Stone Allerton Windmills - Fiona Torrens-Spence

20 March: Current excavations on Mendip – Prof Jodie Lewis. This is the annual Barry Lane lecture to which we are invited at Westbury-sub-Mendip. A mini bus will pick up in Cross and Axbridge, with details to follow.



It's Christmas party time

This year's get-together organised by Liz Scott at the Lamb Inn, Weare, proved a big success with everyone enjoying their meal and the chance to have a good natter. And, of course, to have a go at answering the 20-question quiz again set by David Roberts and won by the Les Stanley team. In case you weren't there but still want a

chance to test your general knowledge, here are some samples of the posers: **a) Which pioneer of photography was born at Compton House, Axbridge?; b) When was the Battle of Sedgemoor fought? (half a mark for the correct decade); c) which National Trust property in Devon was built by the D'Oyly Carte family? Answers at the end.**

SIGNS OF THE PAST ON THE ROAD TO CROSS

The audience at our meeting in December had a fantastic surprise awaiting them – not only was the replica of Cross's historic turnpike mile post put on show for us by Compton Bishop Parish Council, but also revealed for the first time in decades were a 200-year-old boundary marker and an AA sign from the early years of the 20th century, pictured below..



Janet Dowding, author of the book *The Toll-houses Of Somerset*, who was at our meeting, has kindly given more details of the old coaching road from Bristol to Bridgwater, as well as the boundary marker.

She writes: Bristol Turnpike Trust was set up in 1726, and the road was turnpiked as far south as Weare in 1749 then extended to East Brent in 1759 under the Bridgwater Trust. So the Bristol Trust would have dealt with Old Coach Road in Cross from 1749 onwards.

The individual parishes didn't have responsibility for the repair of the roads or funding of the toll roads - the Trust did. It was run by a group of Trustees, who were usually prominent local people - landowners, big farmers, doctors, lawyers. The whole purpose of the Trust charging tolls was to provide the money to repair the roads.



The parish boundary markers simply indicated the point where the turnpike road crossed from one parish into another. Yours probably stood on the east side of the road from Cross to Weare and it would originally have been painted white with black lettering.

It is dated 1823; then 14 years later, the Bristol Trust decided to supercede the original stone milestones with new metal ones. .

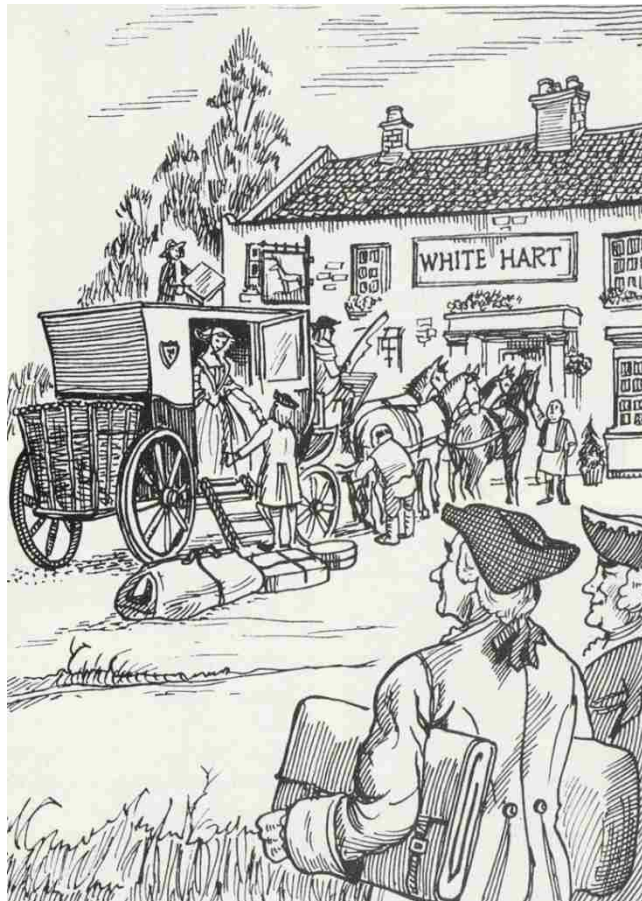
It isn't exactly rare as there are still quite few of these fluted boundary markers still in situ in the Bristol Turnpike Trust area, Somerset, Gloucestershire and the City of Bristol. But it is rare enough for them to be prized as old historical artefacts, especially when things like this are constantly being stolen, often to order for unscrupulous collectors.

Ian Tabrett adds: the replica Cross milepost, pictured last month, is expected to be erected on the A38 near the site to which it was moved in 1930 from its original position. The damaged 1837 milepost is now in the care of SW Heritage. Meanwhile, in her excellent book, *The Story*

of Compton Bishop and Cross (published 1994), Margaret Jordan notes that an 1859 directory describes Cross as “a small village containing three respectable posting houses. It is not remarkable for anything, but most of the coaches both up and down to Plymouth and Exeter changes horses here.”



Margaret includes a photograph of a token issued by the White Hart Hotel, Cross – now the White Hart Inn – and gives a comprehensive list of the named coaches which in 1830 called at Cross, either the White Hart or Kings Arms, now known as



The Old Manor House, a five star b&b, as well as a sketch of the busy scene each arrival may have created. The services then advertised were: “*Duke of Wellington*, Bristol to Bridgwater, calls at the White Hart every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 12.30; *Royal Mail*, Bristol to Barnstaple, calls at the Kings Arms every morning at a quarter before 12; *The Times*, Exeter to Birmingham, Kings Arms every afternoon at 2.30pm; *Duke of Wellington*, Exeter to Birmingham, the White Hart. Monday. Wednesday Thursday, 12.30pm; *The Times*, Bristol to Exeter, the Kings Arms every morning at 10am; *The Comet*, Bristol to Exeter, the White Hart Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12.30pm; *Estafette* mail, Kings Arms daily at 12.20pm; *Non Pariel*, the White Hart daily except Sunday 9am and 7pm; *Exquisite*, Cheltenham to Exeter, Kings Arms daily except Sunday, 2.30pm; *Exonian* mail. Bristol

to Plymouth, Kings Arms daily 9am, returns 4pm; *John O’Groats*, the White Hart every day except Sunday at 11am. Margaret also records in her book that with the end of the golden age of coaching, the Kings Arms closed, and in 1894 the White Hart advertised itself as a hotel and venue for a completely different kind of traveller – the cyclist! But before that, the famed road-maker John MacAdam stayed in Cross while gathering information on road-surfacing techniques, and while there is thought to have met a Brent Knoll farmer who claimed the credit for introducing a road so smooth that coachmen complained it made them careless!

TO BE OR NOT TO BE...that is the question for Axbridge Methodist Church

The future of one of the most prominent and impressive buildings in Axbridge's West Street – the Methodist Church – is under consideration. More than 60 people attended a meeting to discuss options, and at the end, they agreed steps should be taken by all the organisations involved to keep it in community use.

Research into the history of the Grade 2 listed Gothic-style church has been carried out by Axbridge resident, three times Mayor and much-respected church member, Mrs Edith Channon. Documents in the Methodist archives in the Bristol Records Office show the total cost of the building and all its fittings when it was completed in 1850 was £500.



It apparently replaced an older meeting place in the town which may well have dated back to the 18th century. The church's organ built by John Clark, of Bath, and in 1901, the records show the organist gave his services free – although three years later he resigned to become the paid organist at the Parish Church – while the organ blower was paid 16s (80p) a year! Mrs Channon found that in 1869, a house was bought for the Minister. In 1910, several legacies were used to install a low-pressure hot water heating system, which cost £83. Seven years later, new Trustees had to be appointed as only three of the original 16 were left. Five of the replacements lived in Axbridge, while the others came from Cheddar, Sandford and Churchill. The church

was originally in the Banwell Circuit, but during re-organisations in 1933 it moved to the Cheddar Valley Circuit, then in 1982 to the newly-formed West Mendip Circuit. The church has 10 impressive stained glass windows: four donated by Sydney Hill JP, of Langford House, with others given by Trustee J A March, of Axbridge, and another in memory of Charles Tilley and his wife. The hall under the main church has been used as a schoolroom, small private school, a Sunday school and for a playgroup. Despite a dwindling congregation, there are hopes it will continue in community service.



DID YOU KNOW...?

...that after recruiting more volunteers, the King John Hunting Lodge Museum has 22 stewards, and as a result there are hopes that it may be possible to open the Museum every day during the 2025 season.

...that the Friends now have 50 signed-up members and welcomed a number of visitors last year.

...that this year, the Museum Trust is focussing on attracting more local residents to come to see the displays. At the moment only five per cent of locals visit.

...that the three floors of the Museum's timber-framed building, thought to date from about 1460 and which was once a wool merchant's house, has more than 350 items on display.



BACK HOME...

The restored historic Cross milestone is now back in position beside the A38 near the bridge over the Cheddar Yeo river.

AND FINALLY, THE ANSWERS TO THOSE QUIZ QUESTIONS

- a) Peter Wickens Fry;
- b) 6 July, 1685
- c) Coleton Fishacre