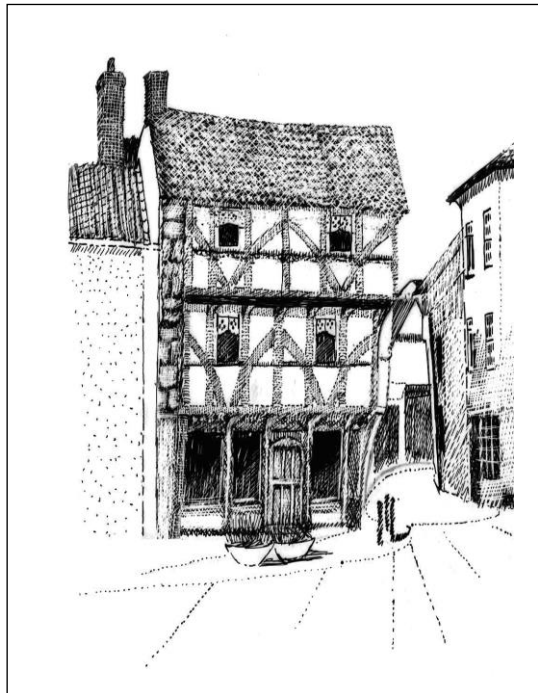


Issue No. 2 May 2023

Retrospect

Newsletter
of
The Friends of King John's Hunting Lodge



News, Views and Events

Museum charity no.

[1091161](#)

An Update from Liz Scott

Welcome to the second issue of *Retrospect*. The second meeting of the Friends of KJHL has also taken place and Margaret Jordan's talk on Cross and Compton Bishop was enjoyed by over 30 people. Thank you all for your support. See Past Event.

I now have the official membership forms and will be sending them out to those who have expressed an interest in joining the Friends of King John's Hunting Lodge. Benefits include regular talks, visits to places of interest, invitations to events organised by the Axbridge and District Museum Trust such as coffee mornings and an annual visit to a National Trust property in October. Members will also have the benefit of free talks. You are able to pay by BACS but I would appreciate the return of the form as, without a paper copy, we are unable to claim gift aid. Official membership cards will be sent to paid up members and should be brought to all events to qualify for free entry if appropriate.

We would like to make *Retrospect* a lively and interesting read and would welcome contributions from you all, preferably in Calibri (Body) 12 point. So, please start writing. Contributions should be sent to Liz Scott at:

moorlandfm@btinternet.com

We shall look forward to hearing from you.

Liz Scott

Programme

Wednesday May 17th

Peter Wickens Fry – a pioneer photographer from Compton House, Axbridge.

Speaker: John Page.

Venue: Compton House, Axbridge at 7.00 for 7.30pm.

Donations of £5.00 a head please, to include a glass of wine / soft drinks and nibbles.

NB Numbers are limited for this popular venue. Please book with Liz Scott by 15th May to ensure a place.

Liz's contact details are: 01934 733341 or moorlandfm@btinternet.com

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. However an overview of the mill can be conducted at ground level if you prefer. Full details of safety factors are available from the leaders. roberts.dandm@gmail.com

Sunday June 25th

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

Details to follow. See item on Celebrating our history.

July TBA

Other dates for your diary

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 (Members free £5 non members)

Wednesday October 18th.

The Strawberry Line Past, Present and Future.

Speaker: Lois Brenchley

Venue: Cross Memorial Hall (Members free £5 non members)

Wednesday November 15th TBA

Friday December 8th

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

Details and menus to follow.

Other News and Events.



Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Programme for May

Saturday 20th May

Venue: Friends Meeting House, Taunton.

10.30 am AGM

Guided tour of Taunton by Nigel Pearce in the afternoon

Past Event

An Illustrated History of Two Villages - Cross and Compton Bishop

Speaker: Margaret Jordan on 19th April 2023

Margaret compared a recent picture of Compton Bishop with the first known map of the area and found that very little had changed: the Church, Manor Farm, The Vicarage, Compton House, and the cottages around Church Road were all still there although the school marked on the map had gone as it was bombed during the second world war. A network of fields surrounded the area which in both the 1880 and 1900 maps showed apple orchards. Records show that in those times there were sixteen orchards.

Every village has a story to tell, especially if of the rich and famous. However, those working locally on the farms and in the market gardens, the wheelwrights, blacksmiths and quarry men, they all have something to contribute. There were slides of the hard-working labourers out in the fields cutting hay and corn by hand, horses pulling implements to turn and make the hay and to transport it to the hay ricks and also quarrymen digging out the limestone by hand in the quarry at Cross.

A Bronze age gold bracelet was found near the pumping station at Cross and is now in the British Museum. The date of the find is unrecorded and the age of it has been challenged but the British Museum is happy that the bracelet is Bronze Age. This is interpreted as an indication that there was an early settlement at Cross. The 1898 pumping station is to be found on the south side of the road just past the White Hart and is a distinct brick and stone building that has now been converted into a dwelling.

The Saxon Charter of Compton Bishop shows that the boundary in the east extends into West Street in Axbridge. Hence the fact that Compton House at Townend and the Workhouse which was built in 1836 were originally in the parish of Compton Bishop. Compton Bishop was once known as Compton Episcopi and Compton Magna indicates ownership by the church. However, in 1648 William Prowse, a wealthy gentleman, acquired most of the land and houses of Compton Bishop and Cross. When a descendant of his, Thomas Prowse, died his daughter, who was married to Charles Mordaunt, inherited the estate and it became part of the Mordaunt Estate.

The Prowse family had owned all three Inns in Cross, The White Hart, The New Inn and The King's Arms now Manor Farm. Cross was an important staging post for coaches and the three Inns provided accommodation for many travellers who passed through. It became a busy "service station" of its day. Cross made its living from these traveller's. The Cross Memorial Hall is built over the original Turnpike cottage and its hexagonal foundations have been retained under the floorboards.

At one time, Cross consisted of little more than the three Inns and a row of cottages / workshops between the New Inn and the White Hart. Unfortunately, all records of the use of these properties have been taken, with the Mordant family papers, to Warwickshire and much more research is required to establish their use. Interestingly a member of the audience, who lives in one of the cottages, commented that there was a tunnel running along the back of all the cottages to the White Hart although it has now been bricked up. This could also be an interesting topic for further research. An early photograph shows the White Hart with the sign into the Ale House and next door there are raised steps into a door between the bay windows which gave access to a first-floor reception area for coach travellers. There were similar steps outside the New Inn where the coaches could draw up alongside for passengers to dismount. However, there were no stables evident by the White Hart. The majority of stables and coach houses were to be found at The King's Arms. Evidence suggests that the workshops around the White Hart were for a wheelwright and a blacksmith. The existence of a mission house has also been mooted.

A number of famous people are thought to have visited and stayed at Cross. Margaret draws the following conclusions. Judge Jefferies, at the time of the bloody assizes, is reputed to have stayed at the White Hart but there is no evidence for this, and he is more likely to have stayed in Wells. Queen Victoria is said to have visited although she only came to the South-West once and that was by train so, it seems unlikely that she would have travelled to Cross. John McAdam, the famous road builder, came to look at the Gabriel Stone road in East Brent and William Wordsworth wrote a letter stating he was at an inn at Cross but did not say which one. He was known to have walked from Nether Stowey to Cheddar on several occasions.

The coming of the railway in 1869 saw the gradual decline of both coaching inns and horse drawn travel and this was further compounded by the advent of the motor car. The railways, however, provided a new market for the produce of local farmers and market

gardeners with rapid transport to the cities of Bristol, Birmingham and London. Hence the King's Arms Inn became Manor Farm. The Cheddar valley became famous for its early strawberries and growers in Cross and Compton Bishop benefitted from these new markets. A photograph showed the extent of the market gardens around the New Inn.

To the West of Compton Bishop lies Webbington House built in 1907, now the Webbington Hotel. It was the Country Residence of City of London Merchant Banker Herman Tiarks who was a keen hunting man kept his own pack of hounds in Kennel Lane. Towards Compton Bishop from the Webbington, Mrs Wookey ran a boarding house where visitors came by horse drawn carriage from Weston-S-Mare to admire the view and enjoy a renowned scrumptious cream tea.

Photographs of family gatherings and local people make up the story of Cross and Compton Bishop and descendants of the Wookey, Tilly, Smith, Vincent, Prowse, Tiarks and many more families mentioned still live in the area.

Margaret concluded as it was not until the 20th Century that the village of Cross was on a crossroad, therefore the name must come from another source. She suggested that an old document might give a clue. In this document Thomas Prowse states in 1768 that 'going East to an ancient Cross made before any of our memories' might be a clue to the villages name.

This was a very interesting talk with many photographic memories . Our thanks to Margaret and her team of 3 Richards for an enjoyable evening.

Liz Scott.

Celebrating our Local History.

Sunday June 25th is the 400th anniversary of the James I Charter of Incorporation that permitted Axbridge to have 2 maces and to extend its jurisdiction to the unruly inhabitants of West Street. To celebrate this event a display is being organised in King John's Hunting Lodge.

Do you know of any other events that should be celebrated? Besides Axbridge, this area includes all the villages from Wedmore to Shipham, Cheddar to Brent Knoll and Mark to Brean. If you would like to bring an important anniversary to our attention, please contact John Page at: myrtle.bk@gmail.com.