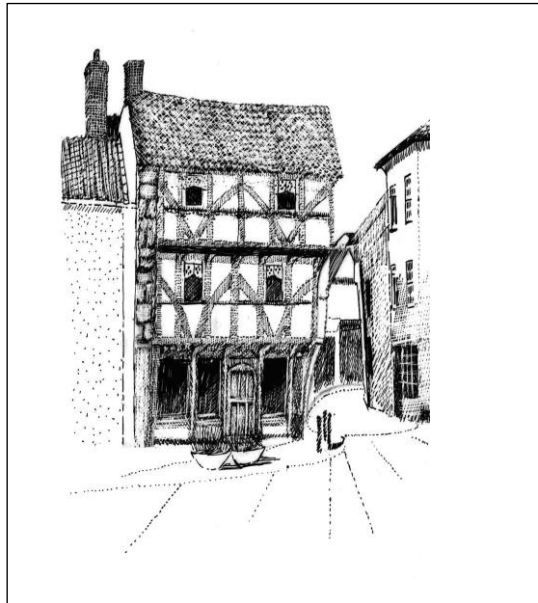


Retrospect

Issue No 17, September 2024

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 really want to hear your views, comments, and suggestions for the future – and importantly, articles are always welcome for inclusion in *Retrospect*. Send your ideas to Liz by email at moorlandfm@btinternet.com and contributions to editor Ian Tabrett at tabrett.cross@btinternet.com These are vital to continue making *Retrospect* an interesting and informative read, and are urgently needed!

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OUR DIARY DATES FOR THE REST OF THIS YEAR

Wednesday September 4: *coffee morning* for stewards and Friends at the Almshouse, Axbridge. 11am.

September 18: *The Churches of Weston-super-Mare.* Talk by John Crockford Hawley. Cross Memorial Hall, 7.30pm; non-members £5, refreshments £2

Tuesday October 15: *Museum annual general meeting,* Axbridge Church Rooms, 7.30pm.

October 23: *visit to Dyrham Park National Trust property* with stewards of Axbridge and District Museum Trust. Entry free plus cream tea, but perhaps bring a picnic lunch although refreshments are available on site. Minibus will pick up at Cross at 9.30am and Axbridge Square 10am. *Please confirm with Liz Scott if you will be attending.*

November 20: *Somerset fingerposts, signposts, milestones and toll houses.* Talk by Richard Raynesford, of the Milestone Society, with introduction by Janet Dowding, author of *The Toll Houses of Somerset.* Cross Memorial Hall, 2.30pm; non-members £5, refreshments £2

December 13: *Christmas meal and quiz,* Lamb Inn, Weare, 7pm. Menu to follow.

The Banwell Society of Archaeology and Local History have sent details of their forthcoming monthly meetings, to which visitors are most welcome. Venue: Banwell Village Hall, BS29 6BS, where there is easy parking. The Chair is David Eley and Secretary, Maggie McCarthy. Meetings start at 7.30pm prompt; visitors £3, refreshments available.

Friday 13 September: *My life as a wheelwright and carriage restorer.* Talk by Mike Horler

Friday 11 October: *The world of ghosts.* Talk by Brian Wright.

Friday 8 November: *Steep Holm's maritime history 1300-1850.* Talk by Philip Ashford

Friday 13 December: *Bleadon – ancient village.* Talk by John Crockford-Hawley

...AND OUR EXCITING PROGRAMME FOR 2025

Wednesday 15 January: *members' evening* with short presentations by Friends on topics ranging from . emigration from the Allertons to America and Australia in the mid-19th century to historic documents held by the Axbridge and District Museum Trust

Wednesday 19 February: *the SS Great Britain.* Talk by long-time volunteer Brian Aston Cross Memorial Hall (CMH), 2.30 pm

Thursday 13 March: *Latest excavations on Mendip.* The Barry Lane lecture at Westbury-sub-Mendip by Prof Jodie Lewis. A mini-bus will pick up in Cross and Axbridge. Details to follow.

Wednesday 19 March: *the Aston and Stone Allerton windmills.* Talk by Fiona Torren-Spence. CMH, 2.30pm

Wednesday 16 April: *Somerset's Edwardian Gardens.* Talk by Yvonne Bell. CMH, 2.30pm

Wednesday 21 May: *The origins of nursery rhymes.* Talk by Sue and Phil Thorne. CMH, 7.30 pm

Wednesday 18 June: *Day trip to Watchet* with a guided tour of the Radio Museum and chance to take in the other attractions around the harbour. Minibus will pick up in Cross and Axbridge. Details to follow.

Wednesday 16 July: *Blackmoor Farm and Chapel, Cannington.* The Dyer family's 15th century Grade 1 listed manor house and chapel, retaining many of the period features including oak beams, stone archways and huge open fireplaces. Minibus will pick up in Cross and Axbridge. Details to follow.

August: No meeting.

Wednesday 17 September: *Historic postcards given to our museum.* Talk by John Page. CMH, 2.30pm

October: *Stewards and Friends of King John's Hunting Lodge Museum visit a National Trust property.* Full details to be confirmed

Wednesday 19 November: *The life, times and tragedy of a Somerset country lad.* Talk by Ian Tabrett. CMH, 2.30pm

December: *Christmas dinner and quiz.* Details to be confirmed

WIRE-LESS TIMES

Did you see the news recently that only well under half of households in this country still have landline telephones? If you did, you probably also spotted the warning which followed that soon, no one will be able to have these phones anyway as the copper wires that serve them are being phased out as obsolete, leaving us to the mercies – or should that be delights? – of mobile smartphones.

All of which led me to recalling the good old days when demand was so high for telephones that almost every street and byway was lined with poles festooned with wires connecting pretty well everyone with the rest of the world. There was also the time soon after World War Two when demand swamped the old General Post Office (GPO) and because the system couldn't cope, many folk had to share a line with a neighbour or even a stranger: if you wanted to make a call, you could only do so if they weren't already chatting away.

Every town and most villages had their own telephone exchanges – Axbridge, Banwell, Blagdon, Cheddar, Churchill, Edingworth, Wedmore – where you could expect a (generally) cheerful voice asking: "Number please." Then of course there were those lovely red phone boxes where you put your pennies in the slot and pressed either Button A to speak to the person you were calling, or if they didn't answer, Button B to get your coppers back.

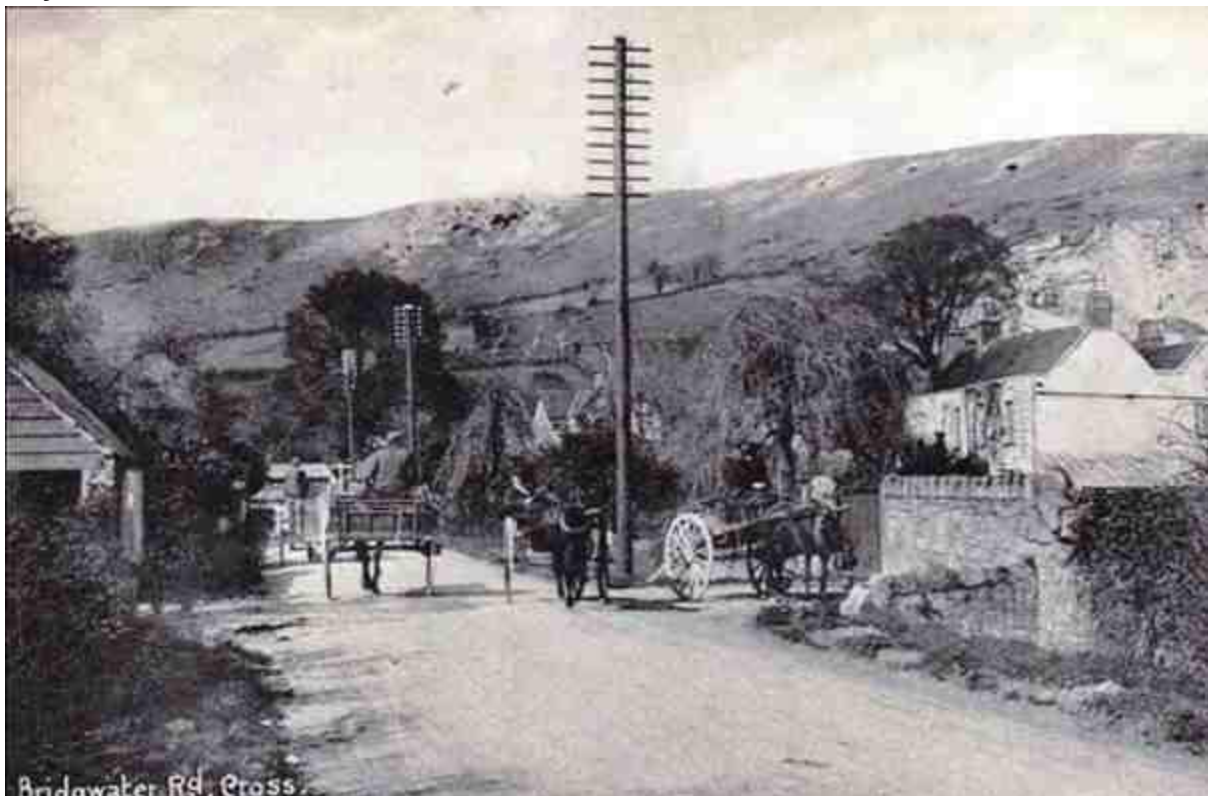
All those nostalgic memories led me to look out some of the old photos in my collection showing my village of Cross in the days when the main thoroughfare was lined with telegraph poles, while up at Shute Shelve, a line of poles closely followed the track of the Cheddar Valley railway, like every branch or main line, carrying wires so that signalling staff between Yatton and Wells could pass on train information to each other, or just gossip..

Yes, those were the days, even though the telephone poles have been replaced by just as many carrying electricity lines. Not to mention all those new pylons..!

Ian Tabrett



Telephone poles line the road outside Cross Post Office while (below), they continue along Old Coach Road to Weare, Burnham-on-Sea, Bridgwater and beyond.





Shute Shelve when road traffic was quieter but phone traffic clearly wasn't! And (below) the Cheddar Valley branch line at Shute Shelve, showing the telegraph poles that lined the track, rather than the thick vegetation there now.

