

BRADWELL HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Up-coming events

We will be starting our post summer group of three talks on Tuesday 16th September at 8 pm. But now until November they will be held in St Barnabas church with parking being available in the school playground. In my talk I shall be addressing the question 'Why Henry Frederick Stuart did not become King Henry IX? In order not to give away the answer to this query I'll add no more now.

Thanks to the Bradda Dads

Another consequence of the closure of the Methodist Hall was that the metal cabinets and the archival material they contained had to be moved and a home for them was provided by Priest-in-Charge Rev Louise Petheram and Church Warden Jane Dalrymple at St Barnabas'. The space available was upstairs on the balcony – quite a challenge. This was met and overcome by the Bradda Dads but only after the contents of the cabinets and the shelving was removed. Somehow the smaller cabinet was manoeuvred up the spiral staircase but the larger one had to be hauled up. A massive undertaking!

Visit to Macclesfield Silk Museum and Mill

Jill and Brian Salisbury are to be congratulated on the visit they organised for a group of members to the Silk Museum and Mill in Macclesfield on 21st of August. The museum and mill are in separate buildings so for the conducted tours the party was split into two under two knowledgeable guides. The complexity of the machinery in the Silk Mill was an eye opener. This included what were some of the earliest analogue computers. We saw the shuttles (of the type made by Samuel

Fox's father) in action. We were there for 2 – 3 h but several of our members decided that they would revisit the museum independently to see exhibits they had been scarcely able to take in. For example the museum has a collection of Egyptian artefacts.

Squire Fox of Bradwell Grove House.

From time to time the BHS receives documents from former Bradwell residents. A few years ago we received a letter from Zoë Brame (née Elliott, lived on the Crescent) then living in Warrington. What she enclosed was a copy of *The Bridge Magazine* for June 2014. The magazine covers Burford and surrounding villages in the Cotswolds. The section that Zoë thought would be of interest to us was headed

BRADWELL VILLAGE NEWS

Squire Fox's Coffee Lounge.

The 16th May saw the opening of our new coffee lounge in our village hall. It is open every Friday from 10.30 am to 12.30 pm and acts a central meeting place to enjoy the comfort of our new 'lounge style furniture', make friends, enjoy a wide range of coffees and use the lending library facility.

So who was Squire Fox?

William Henry Fox who was born in 1847 was the only son of Samuel and Maria Fox. Samuel Fox was born in the Peak District Village of Bradwell and lived there throughout his early life. There is still a pub in the Derbyshire village called the Samuel Fox. He became an industrialist and eventually owned a steel works. But he is most famous for his invention (*sic*) of the Paragon umbrella, which had a steel frame based on the famous Victorian fashion of the crinoline skirt. Samuel became very wealthy and decided to purchase an estate befitting his status. In 1871 he became the owner of Bradwell Grove House (*the name he gave it*). His son did not live there with his parents at first but must have moved in around 1880 because his name appears in the 1881 census as a resident of Bradwell Grove House. Samuel Fox died in 1887 and William duly inherited the estate. For a while he continued to own the family business in the Midlands but sold it in the late 1880s whereupon he became a typical late Victorian country squire. He lived with his widowed mother who died in 1906 and with her two companions the Misses Frith of who virtually nothing is known. The estate was huge. William was the owner of several farms, Holwell Downs Farm, Filkins

Downs Farm, College Farm, Woodside Farm, Signet Farm, Oxlease Farm and Hockstedt Farm as well as more land in Eastleach, Broadwell, Kencot, Alvescot and Shilton.

He employed tenant farmers to run the estate but took a keen interest in what went on and in the finances and prosperity of the land. The food consumed at the 'big house' came almost exclusively from his farms. Bradwell Grove House as it stood when he inherited it was not entirely to his liking as it was not big enough for his household of at least 16 live-in servants, so he had the house almost completely rebuilt in Victorian Gothic style. Nowadays only a few outbuildings and the walled garden date back to the house that was there before. He had a large number of estate workers as well who came into Bradwell Grove daily. He owned the nearby village of Holwell, and in 1890 he also had the church (*St Peters*) rebuilt and enlarged at his own expense plus a new larger village school for the children of his tenants and servants.

William Fox never married. But he was an extremely sociable squire and had frequent house parties at Bradwell Grove.. The estate boasted a fine cricket team and he also bred pheasants and had huge shooting parties. He was well known in Oxfordshire, he was high sheriff of the county in 1883-4 and in 1884 was made deputy Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire.

Squire Fox was a fair, generous but demanding employer. He insisted that his entire household attend church every Sunday morning and had a special sand path laid from the North entrance to the house along the road to Holwell so that they could all walk to church. In winter he insisted that the church was properly heated at his expense so that the staff did not feel the cold. The Christmas parties he threw for his staff were legendary in the area. Everyone received a generous gift, in your first year of employment that gift was almost always a Fox umbrella. Carol singers came up to the party from Shilton and there was a dance in the servants' hall. In the early days Mr Fox had coaches and liveried coachmen but in the 20th century he ran a splendid 'London' car, complete with uniformed chauffeurs and footmen in attendance. He used the car to get to either Shipton under Wychwood or Alvescot stations on his frequent trips to London and his weekend guests were usually met from their trains by his splendid vehicle which made a lot of noise and belched out black smoke.

Squire Fox died in 1920 and the estate was purchased by the Heyward-Savage family, the descendant of whom now own it. Both Maria Fox and her son are buried in Holwell churchyard.

Note: The piece from Volume 5 Number 5 of The Bridge newsletter for June 2014 is reproduced almost as it first appeared by the kind agreement of Elaine and Gordon Elliot co-editors of The Bridge. A short section of the previous management of coffee mornings has been omitted.

What was Bradwell Grove House now sits at the centre of the Cotswold Safari Park.

