

= King John 's Hunting Lodge , Axbridge =

King John 's Hunting Lodge is a wool @-@ merchant 's house built c . 1460 in Axbridge , a town in the English county of Somerset . It is a jettied timber @-@ frame building of three storeys , occupying a corner plot on the town square . The building has served a variety of purposes with shops on the ground floor and workshops and living quarters on the first and second floors . At one time The King 's Head Inn occupied part of the building and a sculpture of a king 's head , which acted as a sign for the pub is preserved within , and a replica is attached to the outside . The lodge was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1971 , and repairs were undertaken to reverse significant deterioration to the building .

The house is leased by the National Trust to Axbridge and District Museum Trust , who operate it as a local museum which includes exhibits relating to local geology and history from the Neolithic to World War II . It is a Grade II \* listed building .

= = History = =

In 1340 the site of the present building was occupied by a building belonging to John Oldeway . It contained shops and was called " the stockhouse " . The current building , which was constructed around 1460 , was occupied by shops on the ground floor , living areas and workshops on the first floor , and storage and sleeping areas on the second floor .

The house is the finest of a number of timber @-@ frame houses in the High Street and The Square . The three @-@ storey building is jettied on two adjacent sides and has three gables on the longer side . On the first and second floors curved brackets can be seen which support the floor above . The structure is based around a single wooden post , known as a king post , at the front corner of the building , which supports the floor boards and the horizontal dragon beams that carry the projection of the upper floors at each level .

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries , the building housed a succession of shops and underwent various changes which contributed to its physical decline . A Miss Ripley bought the building in 1930 , and used it to store her collection of antiques until 1968 , allowing the public to see her collection once a year . She bequeathed it to the National Trust in 1971 , who undertook the works necessary to make it fit for visitors and saved it from probable destruction .

In overhauling the structure of the premises , the National Trust restored its medieval character by recreating on the ground floor the appearance of arcaded stalls opening onto the street , and the sixteenth @-@ century decoration of the upstairs windows , although this caused a dilemma as it required the removal of fine 18th @-@ century windows .

The origin of the name is unclear as it was not built until long after the reign of King John , who died in 1216 . Its present name first appeared in a 1915 publication , The Heart of Mendip by Francis Knight , when it was being run as a saddler 's shop . The royal part of the name may have come from the fact that there was a carved king 's head on the building , from a time when The King 's Head Inn occupied part of the premises , but whether this represented King John or another king is not known . The head was attached to one corner of the exterior , but is now inside the building , and a replica placed on the outside .

= = Museum = =

The property is owned by the National Trust and run as a local history museum by Axbridge and District Museum Trust with support from Somerset County Museums Service and Axbridge Archaeological and Local History Society . Until 2011 funding was received from Sedgemoor District Council , but this was withdrawn and an entry charge introduced to help pay for the running costs .

The museum aims to illustrate the history , geology and community of Axbridge and the surrounding area ( the area of the old Axbridge Rural District , which included many neighbouring villages such as Cheddar , Wedmore , Mark and Winscombe ) . There is a core of long @-@ term and permanent exhibits , reviewed regularly for possible changes , updates , and revised displays and information ,

and there is a programme of temporary exhibitions to reflect many aspects of local life and heritage .

Each room has a specific theme , which includes aspects of local history such as life during World War II , and aspects of law and order . Another exhibition shows local geology and archaeological finds from local caves . The exhibits include a fine flint flake which has been identified from the Neolithic occupation of Ebbor Gorge . The museum also displays paintings of local scenes and objects including a clock made by John Bilbie of the Bilbie family , who lived in Axbridge , and a merchants ' table known as a " nail " , similar to those outside The Exchange in Bristol which were made with a flat top and raised edges to prevent coins from tumbling onto the pavement .