



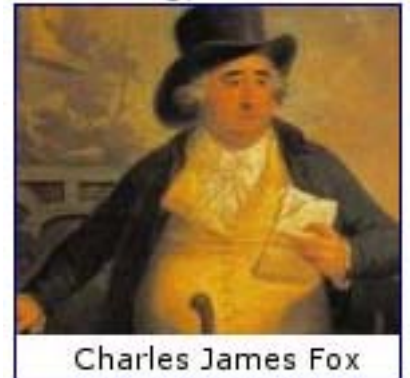
Foxhills

YOUR CLUB IN THE COUNTRY

Foxhills, a potted history

Ironically, considering it's now the home of the most family oriented golf club in the UK, the founding of the Foxhills estate is rooted in gambling, violence, womanising, and - need we say it - a top politician.

But there wasn't a tabloid reporter in sight when these tumultuous events took place. Although Foxhills Club & Resort was founded in 1975, the estate itself dates back to the late 1700s, and these scandalous events surround its first ever owner and the man who gave his name to the estate - Charles James Fox.



Charles James Fox



Elizabeth Armistead

Fox came to live in the area in the 1780s with his mistress and former courtesan. Elizabeth Armistead, on St. Anne's Hill nearby. A brilliant but restless parliamentarian (he was MP for Midhurst aged just 19) his talent for passionate oratory was matched only by his appetites for gambling and the high life.

Once he made a wager with the Prince Regent on the number of cats they would see on Bond Street! Later, he fought a duel in Hyde Park, was shot in his ample belly and claimed that he would have died had his opponent, William Adam, not used government-issue gunpowder.

Fox decided to lay low and recuperate in this quiet corner of Surrey. Here, he indulged in his other, rather more sedate passions - gardening and literature. He was responsible for the planting of hundreds of trees around Ottershaw, the results of which can be seen today, and the reason the land gained the name "Fox's Hills."

Being a member of the Prince of Wales 'set' did not endear him to the establishment of George III. Neither did his intellectual support for revolutionary causes in France and America nor his espousal of civil liberties and slave emancipation. When ill health and near ruinous gambling debts forced him out of the metropolis he sought solace in the peace of his country estate. He did not leave in disgrace, or penniless. Such was his popularity that a whip-round in the House of Commons raised enough to pay off Fox's debts and provide an income for him and Elizabeth for the rest of their days.



Foxhills c. 1841 by Thomas Allom, RA



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With the help of his neighbour and friend Sir Joseph Mawbey at Botley Park, Fox took to country living which began to restore his body and spirit. He was recalled to public life all too quickly in 1801 and he died an untimely and lamented death in 1806. A statue of Fox stands at the north end of Bloomsbury Square in London.

Sir Joseph did not long outlive him and the estate was broken up on his death in 1817. His daughter and son-in-law, John Ivatt-Briscoe, bought the area now known as Fox's Hill and France Farm to found the estate as we know it today. A successful lawyer and local MP, Sir John Ivatt-Briscoe commissioned the fashionable architect Basevi, cousin to Disraeli, to build the current Manor House.

Basevi's work includes Ely Cathedral in Cambridge, where he died inspecting the bell tower. A prodigy of the great classicist, Sir John Soane, Basevi designed the Manor to reflect the spirit of the new Victorian age in its restrained charm and elegance. English Heritage has erected a "Blue Plaque" on Basevi's London residence at 17 Savile Row.

As an MP, Ivatt-Briscoe was concerned with local issues helping to found Chertsey Agricultural Association. Their annual ploughing match is held to this day! His only national initiative was to campaign to outlaw the Treadmill as a form of punishment (visitors to our health club will sympathise).

In the 1870s the estate passed to a distant relative of Ivatt-Briscoe, General Hutton, a veteran of the Zulu and Boer wars. Hutton was well regarded for his active role in parish life. We recently met two sisters who remember playing at Foxhills after the Great War. Apparently, Hutton felt responsible for the families of the men who fell under his command and invited them to play in the grounds during their holidays.

Nowadays, of course, Foxhills maintains that family tradition providing full membership for women, the Foxhills Foundation golf programme which has nurtured many fine young players including European Tour stars Paul Casey (holding trophy in photo, right) and Anthony Wall, (standing, second right), plus an Adventure playground and special activities for younger members and guests.

After serving as a convalescent home for wounded officers during the Great War the estate was sold to the Borthwicks, a successful merchant family in the 1920s.

They ran the estate and farm in a manner unchanged since Ivatt-Briscoe and people still remember working at the 'Big House'. The complement of staff was about 15, including a



Golf Foundation Squad 1989



Foxhills

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The Borthwick Era

second chauffeur, Trevor Francis, and the housemaid, Evelyn. Fraternisation was not encouraged and when their relationship was discovered, she was forced to leave. They subsequently married in 1940 and celebrated their 50th anniversary here, in the Manor.

During the second War the family energetically turned the farm, now the Bernard Hunt golf course, over to the Dig for Victory campaign. By the 1960s a gradual decline had set in which resulted in the estate being sold to Aer Lingus.

The Borthwick family keep in touch with the club and in 2003 the late Sir John Borthwick chose Lyne cemetery as his final resting place, and the Manor for his wake.

The airline constructed two golf courses and opened for business in 1975. Operating as a golf club run along traditional lines, Foxhills didn't take off as its new owners had hoped. It took a successful businessman with unusual vision in the shape of Ian Hayton to recognise its massive potential.



Ian Hayton

When Ian bought the estate for £1.4 million in 1983, his family and friends thought it was "one deal too far." But the founder of the Foxhills Club & Resort as we know it today had a long-term vision for the estate. That vision was a place that welcomed families and treated ladies equally. In the early eighties, such a concept was considered truly groundbreaking!

The whole facility needed a huge injection of cash and TLC in order to bring it up to the members' and Ian's expectations. The Manor was totally refurbished, the clubhouse extended, and the interior totally redesigned. All the leisure facilities such as the 12 tennis courts, gym, and health spa have either been introduced or upgraded under Ian's ownership. But perhaps the biggest single investment has been in the golf courses.

The 9-hole Manor course was designed by club professional and 10-times Ryder Cup player



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Bernard Hunt to make the game more accessible to youngsters and beginners. Then, all three courses underwent renovation work to improve either their layout or conditioning. The fairway irrigation that was installed on every course three years ago brought total investment in the resort to £20 million.

The championship courses are now internationally recognised for their excellence and have hosted the PGA European Tour Qualifying School, Senior European Tour events and in 2003 the UK final of the world's largest amateur golf event.



Bernard Hunt MBE

The Resort facilities are now immensely popular with the local community and blue chip companies alike. Together with a loyal and dedicated team, the Hayton family have made Foxhills a major and ongoing success, with a constant stream of improvements in the pipeline ready to keep the facilities bang up to date and in line with the needs of members and guests.

While Foxhills' approach to membership may not be traditional, it is, unlike many established golf clubs, thriving with over 5000 members. Foxhills obviously has a future that is as bright as its colourful past.