

Francis William Buxton 1847 – 1911

Former owner of Pishiobury House and President of Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club.

Official records show that Francis William Buxton was born 5 August 1847 at Leytonstone, in what is now East London. It should be noted, though, that at least one source incorrectly states that Francis was born at the family country home of Colne House in Cromer, Norfolk (Colne House is now a Grade II listed hotel). Francis' birth in Leytonstone is interesting, because he came from a wealthy brewing family who owned the Truman Brewery in Brick Lane, Bethnal Green. His parents must presumably have been temporarily living nearby for some reason at the time of his birth.



The old Truman Brewery in Brick Lane

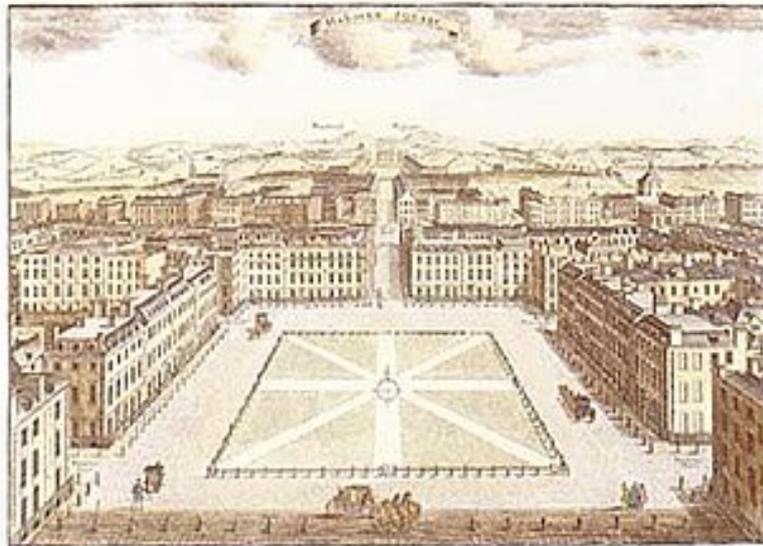
Francis was the son of Sir Edward Buxton, 2nd Baronet Buxton (1812-1858) and his wife Catherine (née Gurney; interestingly, Catherine was Sir Edward's cousin). Sir Edward was the MP for Essex South from 1847 until 1852, and also for Norfolk from 1857 until 1858.

Francis was also the grandson of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, 1st Baronet Buxton (1786- 1845), who was a famous and prominent anti-slavery campaigner and MP for Weymouth from 1818 until 1837. It was Sir Thomas who became the first member of the family to be the sole owner of the Truman Brewery. No less than seven members of the Buxton family later went on to become Masters of Brewers Hall, the London home of the Brewers' Company.



Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton

Francis Buxton was raised as a child mainly at the family's main London home of Hanover Square in Mayfair, but also at their country property of Colne House in Cromer. Indeed, in all the census records from 1851 until his death in 1911, Francis is reported as living at Hanover Square. This was (and still is) a highly fashionable part of London and houses there, even then, commanded an extremely high price.



Hanover Square 1750

Francis was well educated. He attended Trinity College Cambridge and graduated with a BA in Law in 1869. He later trained for the Bar at Lincoln's Inn and became a barrister in 1874. Prior to this, on 27 February 1872, Francis married Mary Emma Lawrence, who was the daughter of John Lawrence, 1st Baron Lawrence. The couple had eight children together. These were: Ruth (born in 1875), Madeline (born in 1876), Hilda (born in 1876), John Lawrence (born in 1878), Frances Mary (born in 1880), Cecil (born in 1881), Hugh Forster (born in 1882) and Robert Vere (born in 1883).

From 1880 until 1885, Francis was the Member of Parliament for Andover and represented the Liberal Party. Later, Francis would become a Justice of the Peace for both the County of London and for Hertfordshire. He was also a director of Martins' Bank. He was a member of the London School

Board from 1899 until 1904 and also sat on the Council of the Girl's Public Day School Company from 1886 until 1903, becoming a vice-president after that.

Our interest in Francis Buxton comes from his purchase of Pishiobury House.



Pishiobury House and garden

As was stated earlier, Francis always appeared in the census records as living in Mayfair. Furthermore, this is complicated by his being listed on the Electoral Register as voting in Norfolk from 1870 until 1904. Francis was, during this time, variously registered to vote either in Cromer, (Sea) Palling or Thorpe St. Andrews. Clearly, Francis never lost his Norfolk connections, as we shall see at the end of this article.

In August of the year 1890, Francis Buxton purchased Pishiobury House for his use as a country estate. Pishiobury was never Francis' main habitation as such, but he would often be seen in residence there. Francis remained in possession of the property until 1905, when it was purchased by Colonel Francis Charrington, a Brewery owner and, no doubt, a family friend through the trade, at which point Francis returned to his London Mayfair home.

Late in the year 1894, Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club became homeless, having been evicted from their Town Field site. At this point, Francis Buxton stepped in to save the day (not a pun). He 'generously donated' a section of the Pishiobury House grounds to be used as a cricket pitch. This was at the northern edge of what is now Pishiobury Park, behind 'East Park'. However, there was a catch (still no pun, I assure you) in that Francis insisted upon adhering to two rules: the first was no use of bad language; and the second was no consumption of intoxicating drink.

Partly in gratitude, and most certainly because he owned the ground, Francis Buxton was made President of the Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club from 1896 until 1904. Rather unsurprisingly, his place was taken in 1905 by the new owner of Pishiobury, Francis Charrington. There was no pavilion in those days, just a bell tent. The Cricket Club continued to play at Pishiobury until 1908, three years after Francis Buxton had moved on.



Sawbridgeworth Cricket Club at Pishiobury in 1900

Two of the sons of Francis and Mary are worthy of mention. They must have resided for at least a short time at Pishiobury, and as such they are also a part of the heritage of the town. John Lawrence Buxton was educated at Eton and Oxford. He became a Brigadier in the British Army. He fought in the Boer War, where he was severely wounded. He later fought in the Great War, where he was decorated with a DSO and was mentioned in despatches. John was made a Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George in 1919. He later served in Gibraltar and became an Aide-de-Camp to King George V. He retired from the military in 1940. He died in 1951.

Robert Vere Buxton was also educated at Eton and Oxford. He was a first-class cricketer and played for Eton, Oxford University and Middlesex. Robert served with the Sudan Civil Service before the Great War and was awarded the Order of the Nile. In the Great War, he served in the Middle East alongside T. E. Lawrence (of Arabia) and was mentioned in despatches twice. He became Lt Colonel of the 2nd Battalion Imperial Camel Corps and was awarded a DSO in 1919. Robert died in 1953.

On 14 November 1911, Francis Buxton passed away at his Hanover Square home in Mayfair. He was buried on 18 November that year at Marsham in Norfolk, not far from Cromer. This clearly showed his love of that county. Francis' widow Mary was awarded an OBE in 1918. She died on 21 February 1939.



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