

### INTRODUCTION

The picture postcards of Cox's Cave are dominated by those produced by Frith's of Reigate and these represent over 50% of the total listing. Hartmann of London produced cards, some bearing Frith numbered photographs, during the years 1905-1907. Except for this isolated intrusion Frith dominated the Cox's Cave picture postcard scene until about 1915 when other British printers (Photochrom and Valentine) began to make their impact on the sale of Cox's Cave cards. A study of the Frith and associated printings make an interesting collection.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CAVE

The cave was discovered by a workman named Cooper and explored by George Cox, leaseholder of Cox's Mill (previously known as Harris' Mill) in 1837, when he was clearing the cliff face to erect an outbuilding. The cave was opened to the public in 1838 and because of its extreme beauty became famous throughout the country. Its beauty was recorded by Conybeare, Dean of Llandaff Cathedral in a letter to Buckland in 1843. Gas lighting was introduced c.1870 and in the early days admission was 3/-. Following the death of George Cox in 1868 his sons continued to manage the cave. In 1884 Edward Cox and his brothers attempted to sell the cave but a High Court decision decided in favour of the owner of the land, the Marquis of Bath, that the cave was not owned by the Cox brothers but was the property of the landowner. An out of court agreement enabled the Cox brothers to administer the cave until 1939 when it came under the control of Longleat Estate. Electric lighting was partially installed in 1913 and a second exit opened following the development of the Lady Chapel in the same year. The cave was completely wired for electricity in 1929. The 1913 exit was closed in 1987 and a connection blasted through to Pavey's Cavern (also known as Aquarium cave, Waterfall Cave or Fantasy Grotto) was made in the same year.

### PART 1 - FRITH CARDS

#### FRANCIS FRITH, Reigate

#### publisher and printer

---

This relatively complicated series of cards was on sale to the public for nearly 60 years and, as would be expected, a great number of variants are to be found. The lifespan of these cards commence with undivided backs (1902) and would appear, from postally used copies and other ephemera, to be still on sale as late as 1955 in one form or another. The cards were generally gravure printed in either black and white or sepia, though the 1903 - 1908 sets were printed in a dark, greyish sepia. Three basic sets of real photos may be found, all by Frith, dating c.1905 (Frith's Real Photo Series), 1911 and c.1930

For reasons best known to Frith and Edward Cox, then the senior partner, there are two basic series of cards:

- a) Frith's Series
- b) Cox's Series

Cox's Series appears to have been discontinued after the 1927 printing. From the evidence of the available cards there appears to be no pattern to the distribution of the cards between each series.

Photographic prints, produced by Frith's of Reigate, were available from the mid-1880s. Initially 18 in number, these were increased to 25 in two further stages. By the mid-1890s there were 20 and later this number was increased to 25.

When picture postcards were introduced for Cox's Cave in 1902 the same photographs were used. These cards were produced by Frith in their contemporary vignette style and were progressively published over a period of about eighteen months during 1902 and 1903.

Though the majority of the cards were identified with a particular series there are examples of the same numbered card appearing in both series. By 1904 allocation of cards to a particular series appeared not to have any significance and so were placed randomly in the selection of cards for sale. Consequently the listings for the Frith printed cards group together the both series.

Whether the whole set of 25 cards was issued in the vignette style is not known. Initially the cards were published as Frith's Series (1902) but later (August 1903) a number of the cards appeared bearing Cox's Series. In one form or another, the cards remained as such until 1905 when Nos. 26 - 28 were published of the new chamber discovered that year (The Fairy Palace). These cards are not known printed by Frith and are listed under their printer - Hartmann of London (see Other Publishers). From that time the collection of postcards was progressively increased, sometimes discontinuing earlier unpopular items, until the 1930s when the number had reached 72. There were many popular cards in this series particularly Nos 1, 3, 4, 8, 10, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 32, 33, 37, 48, 62 and 65. Table 1 clearly shows the life of each card.

Card styles remained fairly constant until the 1930s when the margins all round make their permanent appearance though the early real photo types of c.1910 had margins all round. Until the 1930s most gravure printed cards are of the vignette style having one margin (or border) at the bottom, or side, of the photograph which generally included the title of the card. An exception to the general style was a set with no margins that appeared about 1905; others with no margins were published during the 1st. World War but these have not been identified as being the product of Frith. **The later, no margin cards could have been printed by the Cotswold Printing Co. at Wotton-under-Edge in Gloucestershire as it is known that Frith's transferred a considerable quantity of their work, including the Frith's Series, to this site after setting up the company in 1910. All the Frith Series cards were printed at Wotton-under-Edge from this date. It is the belief of the compiler that these cards were actually printed by Harvey Barton of Bristol (see Frith related cards, c.1914 - 1918).**

Between 1902 and 1907 the card title format was progressively changed and new features were added. Initially the title on each card was simply Cox's Cave, Cheddar [1902-1904] though some titles were preceded by a number. During 1905 the title received an additional note recording the visits by King Edward VII (c.1856) and Martel (1904). In 1907 the name of the formation or chamber depicted in the photograph was then added completing the title layout. Two further changes to the title layout took place. In 1910 the visit of King Edward VII was changed to the Late King Edward VII after his death. Finally about 1931, mention of the visits was discontinued.

There are seven basic styles of title layout associated with the gravure printed cards.

#### German printings: black and white photographs

- 1 small hand inscribed titles on photograph [1902 - 1903] sepia and hand coloured photographs
- 2 gothic characters in margin [caps/lc, 1903]
- 3 italic capitals and lower case in margin and printed in various colours [italic caps/lc, 1904 - c.1914]

#### British printings: sepia and hand coloured photographs

- 4 capitals and lower case in margin [caps/lc, c.1914]
- 5 capitals in margin, usually in sepia but a number of cards printed in 1920 had the title printed in red (first letter larger than those of rest of word)[caps, c.1920]
- 6 capitals in margin (all letters same height) [CAPS, c.1930]
- 7 italic capitals and lower case on the photograph [c.1950]

#### Details of the Frith photographs

## COX'S CAVE, Cheddar, Somerset, England

The titles were subject to variation and in some cases, because the card was discontinued, the formation or chamber name never appeared on the card (these are given in *italic*). The list has been confirmed by the recent discovery of a list included in a Cox's Cave photo-book published in 1914.

- No. 1 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Hindoo Temple.  
No. 2 *Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The White Stalagmite.*  
No. 3 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Bat's Wings. (Musical)  
No. 4 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Peal of Bells.  
No. 5 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. A Stalactite & Stalagmite joined in 3 places. 3 more to join  
No. 6 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Curious Stalactites  
No. 7 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Hindoo Temple.  
No. 8 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Speaker's Mace.  
No. 9 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Under the Drapery.  
No. 10 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Gong.  
No. 11 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Drapery  
No. 12 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Nature's Chronometer  
No. 13 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Nature's Chronometer  
No. 14 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Pillars and Arches  
No. 15 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Temple Reflected  
No. 16 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Curtain with Stalagmite Beneath  
No. 17 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Marble Curtain  
No. 18 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. A Group of Figures  
No. 19 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. A General View.  
No. 20 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. A General View  
No. 21 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Nature's Chronometer.  
No. 22 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Hindoo Temple  
No. 23 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Font and Speaker's Mace.  
No. 24 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Honey, Miniature Caves.  
No. 25 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. A Bunch of Carrots, a Harp, two profiles.  
*Note: Numbers 26 - 28 inclusive were not published by Frith; ref. Hartmann*  
No. 29 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Cardinal's Hat.  
No. 30 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Bottle and Funnel.  
No. 31 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Bird's Head  
No. 32 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Mermaid and Musical Stalactite.  
No. 33 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Turkeys.  
No. 34 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Goose (Roasting)  
No. 35 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Niagara Falls.  
No. 36 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Large Brown Loaf.  
No. 37 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Transformation Scene.  
No. 38 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Titania's Staircase. (\*)  
No. 39 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Fairy Pool.  
No. 40 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Canopy. [*not recorded in numbered series*]  
No. 41 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Fish's Fin.  
No. 42 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Black Prince.  
No. 43 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. King Solomon's Mines No.2.  
No. 44 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Enchanted Fairy Palace.  
No. 45 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. King Solomon's Mines No.1.  
No. 46 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. King Solomon's Mines No.3  
No. 47 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Enchanted Fairy Palace. No.1.  
No. 48 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Enchanted Fairy Palace. No.2.  
No. 49 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. A General View.  
No. 50 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. New Grotto at Entrance.  
No. 51 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Lion's Claw No.2.  
No. 52 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Lion's Claw No.1.  
No. 53 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Canopy. (\*\*)  
No. 54 Entrance to Cox's Cave, Cheddar. (\*\*\*)  
No. 55 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Lady Chapel, Discovered 1913  
No. 56 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Lady Chapel, 1913  
No. 57 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Lady Chapel, 1913  
No. 58 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Lady Chapel, 1913  
No. 59 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. New Chamber, 1913  
No. 60 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Lady Chapel, 1913  
No. 61 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Lady Chapel, 1913  
No. 62 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Hindoo Temple and the Mace  
Nos: 63 and 64 *not recorded*  
No. 65 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Nature's Baptismal Font and Speaker's Mace, Fourth Chamber.  
No. 66 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Speaker's Mace.  
No. 67 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Fifth Chamber.  
No. 68 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Part of the Magnificent Roof.

- No. 68A Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Part of the Magnificent Roof. (\*\*\*\*)  
No. 69 *not recorded*  
No. 70 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. The Third Chamber, reflected.  
No. 71 *not recorded*  
No. 72 Cox's Cave, Cheddar. Seventh Chamber, reflected.

### Notes:

(\*) Number 38 is often found bearing the picture belonging to Number 58 and entitled The Lady Chapel, 1913.

(\*\*) The Number 53 is a problem. The Cox's list of 1914 states the title to be The Lady Chapel, 1913. There are three photographs associated with this number:

- Frith numbered card: The Canopy
- Frith numbered card: Entrance to Cox's Cave
- Frith related card (un-numbered): The Canopy [believed to have been printed by Harvey Barton of Bristol]
- Frith related card: The Lady Chapel, discovered 1913

The Frith published two cards numbered 53. The first is entitled The Canopy and the second - Entrance to Cox's Cave. The latter should have been numbered 54. The cave entrance photograph is easily eliminated. However, an unknown printer/publisher (there are good reasons to believe that it was Harvey Barton, Bristol) has published a card entitled No. 53 Cox's Cave, Cheddar, The Lady Chapel Discovered 1913 (plus the Martel visit note). The compiler believes that this card, though not printed by Frith, is the Number 53 as listed in the cave photo-book (Cox, c.1913). The Number 53 was also printed in Saxony thus pre-dating the 1st. World War. The card entitled The Canopy, which is a picture of the wall between the First and Second Chamber, is not known published in the Frith range but is almost certainly the elusive Number 40 (ref. Section 1, Part C, Frith related cards, c.1914 - 1918).

(\*\*\*) This card is also known incorrectly numbered 53.

(\*\*\*\*) This photograph is an enlarged picture of Number 68

### MISSING NUMBERS:

The four missing numbers in the main sequence of cards, 63, 64, 69 and 71 are known in their proof photographic form. In addition Nos. 73 - 77 are also known to exist in photographic print form. Whether any of these photographs were ever published as picture postcards is not known.

- No.63 - Ladye Chapel - detail photo. of column (u.r.), vertical format.  
No.64 - Peal of Bells - a medium distance photograph, showing the group (l.r.) and a small curtain above and slightly to the left. Vertical format.  
No.69 - Ladye Chapel - general view, vertical format.  
No.71 - View looking down the approach to the Ladye Chapel and the second entrance. Vertical format.  
No.73 - View from main entrance into the 1st. Chamber. Vertical format.  
No.74 - View from Second Chamber looking back towards the 1st Chamber. Horizontal format.  
No.75 - Wall details in Second Chamber. Vertical format.  
No.76 - View in Second Chamber with woman standing in the pathway. Vertical format.  
No.77 - Detail of alcove in 1st Chamber. Vertical format.

The publication of the 'real photographic cards' of the later run of the Frith cards occurred in the years 1931 and 1932. The renewed lease of 1884 depended upon 'two lives' - the last of these individuals died in 1938. The lease ended, consequently passing back into the control of Longleat Estate at that time and fully operational under their control in 1939. This uncertainty would not have given the Cox family any incentive to publish large numbers of cards and so it is likely that the 'missing numbers' were never published.

### The Frith title layouts

The vignette style of the Frith sepia lithographed cards were on sale from 1904 to c. 1936 and many variations exist of the title layout in the bottom margin. Initially the title of the card was simply:

[no.] Cox's Cave, Cheddar

Some cards bearing this layout did not include the number.

During 1905 and 1906 the visits of King Edward VII and Martel appeared [FR150] and so the number plus title appeared thus:

[no.] Cox's Cave, Cheddar  
Visited by H.M.King Edward VII.  
600 Caves visited by M.Martel, Paris. Cox's Admired the Most

The use of capital letters give variants to visits layout and usually indicate various printings. It is suggested that the variants found are to enable Frith to identify the exact printing. This variant and the postal back will aid identification of most pre 1910 cards. During 1907 the title layout was further extended and the formation or chamber name included. Typically [FR160 onwards]:

N° 20. Cox's Cave, Cheddar. "A General View."  
Visited by H.M.King Edward VII.  
600 Caves visited by M.Martel, Paris. Cox's Admired the Most.

On the death of King Edward VII, in 1910, the form of the visit note was changed to read:

Visited by the Late H.M.King Edward VII.  
600 Caves visited by M.Martel, Paris. Cox's Admired the Most.

The practice of including the visits on the cards was discontinued between 1931 and 1932.

The style of the title characters, with a few exceptions, was initially a mixture of capitals (upright or italic) during 1902-1903. From 1904 the main section of the title (i.e. number, name of cave and formation/chamber name) were italic upper and lower case characters. This style continued until about 1914. From about 1914 the main title was constructed from upper case characters the first letter of each word being taller than the remainder, e.g. COX'S CAVE. This style was commonly used between 1919 and was discontinued about 1930. Between 1923 and 1926, running concurrently with the previous style, the use of upper and lower case serifed characters was also adopted. From about 1930 the character style changed yet again. This time to large upper case letters. Early use of this style will be found associated with the visits but, by 1932, the visits had been discontinued.

**Summary:**

Card Nos: 1 - 25 1902-1903

Card Nos: 26 - 28 1905 [Not published by Frith but by Hartmann]

Card Nos: 29 - 39 1909

Card Nos: 40 - 54 1910

Card Nos: 55 - 60 1913

Card Nos: 61 - 62 1921

Card Nos: 63 - 72 1931 - 1932

NOTE: No. 40 (not recorded printed by Frith); Nos. 63-64, 69 and 71 have not been recorded published by any printer.