

**MINUTES OF THE 49th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT AYNHO VILLAGE  
HALL WEDNESDAY 27<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2012**

Present: – Rupert Clark – Chairman and Treasurer  
Peter Cole – Secretary.

**1. Secretary's Report**

**Peter Cole**

Peter said that he and a number of others had been given very interesting tours of Adderbury. He wished to thank the officers from Adderbury History Society, and said we would reciprocate next year.

He had had an email from a research student doing a thesis on smallpox in Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire in the eighteenth century, regarding the Pesthouse, and an email from a person who had contacted him about a relative back in 2008. He had discovered that this man, Joseph Aris, had advertised in 1798 the sale of three boats at Aynho Wharf, with good coal trade attached to them and a wooden hut. He may well have been the first coal merchant here, so he sent his correspondent photos of the hut with an awning over the canal taken in 1909 and 2009.

**2. Aynho – A Military History, the heroes and horrors of 2000 years of conflict**

**Rupert Clark**

Rupert started by thanking the many people who had given him useful information, and particularly Dawn Griffiths, who had provided him with a great deal, not only from Banbury, but also from all around the world.

He first mentioned Rainsborough Camp, the oldest military location in this area. He wondered why that spot was chosen rather than Aynho itself, which presents a more defensible position. Originally the ditches would have been much deeper, with palisades and dry-stone walling. They would have used oak posts, needing about 1500 straight trees. These would have been grown locally, close together over sixty years. The first battles there would have been against Ancient Britons, followed by Romans, then Saxons, and finally Danes. We are just on the boundary between Anglo-Saxon Mercia and the area eventually covered by the Danes.

Turning to Aynhoe Park, Rupert suggested that it was likely that there was a defended house, or even a castle, on the site dating from about the same time as the original Norman Church. Some of the stonework in the cellars looks as though it could be Norman.

In Aynho we have "The Butts". Edicts were regularly issued by kings stating that each town or village must ensure that all able-bodied men spend a certain amount of time practising with the longbow in the butts. This was a really important weapon. The amount of power needed to become an effective archer required years of practice, but they were then very effective indeed. They were critical in winning battles at Cressy and Agincourt. In the mid-1300s the crown obtained 1,200,000 arrows, and in 1472 every ship coming back to Britain had to bring in four yew bowstays per ton of goods. A decent archer could fire an arrow to pierce armour 400 yards away, and they were more accurate than muskets, so the longbow was a terrifyingly effective weapon.

One of the least-known battles of the War of the Roses actually took place at Edgcote Moor.

During the Civil War John Cartwright was opposed to the Ship Tax, imposed by his father-in-law the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Some Aynho men resisted the sheriff trying to collect the tax, and John had to go to London to bail them out. John Cartwright moved to London for the duration of the war.

Aynho people must therefore have been surprised when King Charles himself, the most important

man ever to visit Aynho, spent a night at Aynhoe Park after the battle of Edgehill.

Banbury castle was as big as Warwick castle, and dominated the town. There was a very long siege before the castle surrendered. The many fierce battles must have been heard in Aynho.

Royalist soldiers were garrisoned here, and we believe that the tunnels in Aynho were built by them to give them something to do. A really rare officer's helmet is held in Catton House.

The Cartwright Archive, held by the Northamptonshire Records Office, has massive details of the family's military achievements. One of these was William Cartwright, who became a captain, then a major, then a colonel, and eventually a major general. This was all down to status and money. He became an equerry, in charge of the Royal Stables.

Another was William Ralph Cartwright. He was asked to hold up Napoleon at Quatre Bras in 1815, while Wellington was sorting out his battle plans for Waterloo. This was a difficult and miserable job, mainly due to poor weather. At Waterloo he was then posted to the far left flank, so he didn't get much action. He and his cavalry did wade in at the very end, and he managed to relieve a French officer of an enormous trunk containing a very good Meissen dinner service, which is still in the family. He later became a Lieutenant Colonel.

Henry Cartwright joined the Grenadier Guards. This cost him £1,200 – a serious sum of money. He happened to avoid the Crimean War, serving in Dublin at that time. He became a colonel, and later M. P. for South Northamptonshire.

Aubrey Agar Cartwright firstly fought at Boem Plaats in South Africa. He was then in the Crimean, which was close, hand-to-hand fighting in freezing conditions, with all the wrong kit in the wrong places. He was at Sevastopol, and then at Inkerman, where he was killed by a shot to the head, aged 29. A lock of his hair was sent back to his parents, and is in the Archive.

Rupert showed a photo of Alfred Mayo, born in Aynho, who was sent with the Durham Light Infantry to New Zealand in 1864 to take on the Maori. They fought three battles, each of which his battalion won. He was sent back to Britain at the end of his tour of duty, only to return immediately to New Zealand, as his younger brother and sister had emigrated there.

On the northeast corner of the Charlton Road and Portway junction is a spinney known as "Spion Kop". This is named after a battle near Ladyship in the Boer War. Here in 1889 a British brigade climbed Spion Kop hill at night in dense mist, to secure the advantage of the highest spot in the region. They dug themselves in, but when dawn broke, they found that the enemy was established 500 feet higher up than they were. As their trenches were only shallow, due to the rocky nature of the hill, the Boer farmers, who were well equipped with good rifles, were able to mow down many of them easily. The photo appeared in the Times, and went all round the world. Baden-Powell and Churchill fought in this battle, and Ghandi was an Indian stretcher-bearer.

The tree, which is on the corner of the road up from Deddington, was planted by Harry Humphris to commemorate the survivors of Mafeking.

The First World War memorial in the Church records twelve men who died. Most are well-known Aynho names such as Savings, Seccull, Williams and Wrighton. In fact 23 men died from Aynho.

Two brothers both age 20, Second Lieutenant John Digby Cartwright, and Second Lieutenant Nigel Walter Henry Cartwright died just two years and a mile apart in the terrible battles there.

Rupert produced copies of Army documents, and details of most of them, together with information of many more who served in that War and returned safely.

Yet more died in the Second World War. Again many more survived, but most had horrific memories that they never spoke about.

Aynho played quite a large part in WW2, as the largest Army fuel depot in England was sited in the grounds of Aynhoe Park to the east of the House. 200 men from the Royal Army Service Corps and the Pioneer Corps were engaged in collecting 4 gallon jerrycans and drums of petrol from the railway station, taking them up to the Park, stacking them into "haystacks" of 1,000 each, maintaining them, and sending smaller loads back down to the station as they were needed by individual Army units. The trees there were fewer and smaller than they are today, so if just one German bomber had found them, Aynho could well have become the biggest hole in the ground in the country.

Peter Smith was a tank engineer, who was involved in cutting off the Germans retreat in August 1944. Three “invincible” German Tiger tanks appeared, and a gunner, who had not fired the tank’s gun in action before, knocked out all three of them. Peter later fought, repairing tanks in the field in the Battle of the Bulge. He went on to become one of Bovington Tank Museum’s experts, a vintage Rolls Royce restorer, and refurbisher of the Aynhoe Park ice house.

Edward Merriman was too young to fly in the Battle of Britain, but soon after he flew spitfires with Douglas Bader and Jonnie Johnson In their squadron. He ended up as an Air Commodore.

Major Nick Allen served as a Second Lieutenant in Korea, Malaya and Aden.

After the War Peter Latham became an Air Vice Marshall and leader of the Black Arrows Hunter display team. Afterwards he became an horologist, and maintains the Aynho Church clock and carillon.

Lieutenant Andrew Mills served in the Parachute Regiment in the Falklands in 1982. He was the Liaison Officer between the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The Parachute Regiment and 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines. He was the personal link between them and the Commanding Officer. He had to fly in a helicopter to Port San Carlos and back with information, and on the return flight an Argentinean jet passing them fired shells which very nearly hit them. He was often close to the thick of the fighting, and once only avoided being bombed by diving into a trench.

In the 1970s Andrew Bellamy served in Germany, Cyprus and Rhodesia. In the 1980s he was in Germany and Canada, and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. He then commanded a Regiment in Germany and Cyprus, before serving in Supreme Headquarters planning NATO participation in the Balkan Wars. As Colonel he spent some time in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Kenya and Senegal. Now retired he is an Honorary Colonel, and stands in for their Commanding Officer, Prince Philip, when practising for special occasions.

Stephen Brook was in the Logistics Corps, ensuring that huge quantities of food, fuel, ammunition, etc. was sent to the right place at the right time.

The full military history, including details and pictures, will be put on the web in due course.

### **3. Forthcoming Meetings**

July 25<sup>th</sup>      St. Michael’s House

Andrew Mills

August      No meeting

Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>      Captain Cooke

Judith Goodacre