

## MINUTES OF THE 100th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2017

Present: - Rupert Clark – Chairman  
Peter Cole – Secretary

In response to requests recorded in the Village survey, in 2007 the History society was founded. We celebrated the efforts and initiative of the original members.

### The earliest named person with an Aynho connection ~ Peter Cole

This was a Danish thegn or knight known as Asgar or Asgar the Staller. We know this because at the end of the entry in the Domesday Book for Aynho it states “Asgar held it in King Edward’s time”. Asgar was the Standard-Bearer for King Edward the Confessor. As such he was one of the richest and most important men in the kingdom. He owned land in many places in England, mostly in the Midlands

Following Edward’s death Harold assumed the Throne, and chose one of his men to be Standard Bearer. For this reason Asgar did not go north to help Harold defeat his older brother Tostig and Hardrada the King of Norway who were at York conspiring to depose him. Having surprised them and killed both, he learned that William had landed near Hastings, so he hurried back south. Near Aynho he apparently sent word for Asgar to meet him. He told Asgar that he was planning to beat William, but that in case anything went wrong he charged Asgar with going directly to London to prepare the defence of the city.

There seems to be no conclusive evidence of what took place, but it seems likely that Asgar may have convinced the troops holding the Tower of London that with the death of Harold, William was the only possible contender for the Throne. William gave Asgar’s land at Aynho to one of his barons, Geoffrey de Mandeville, for helping him win the Battle of Hastings, as the village had an unrivalled view of the Cherwell Valley.

### The early days of Aynho History Society ~ Brian Reynolds

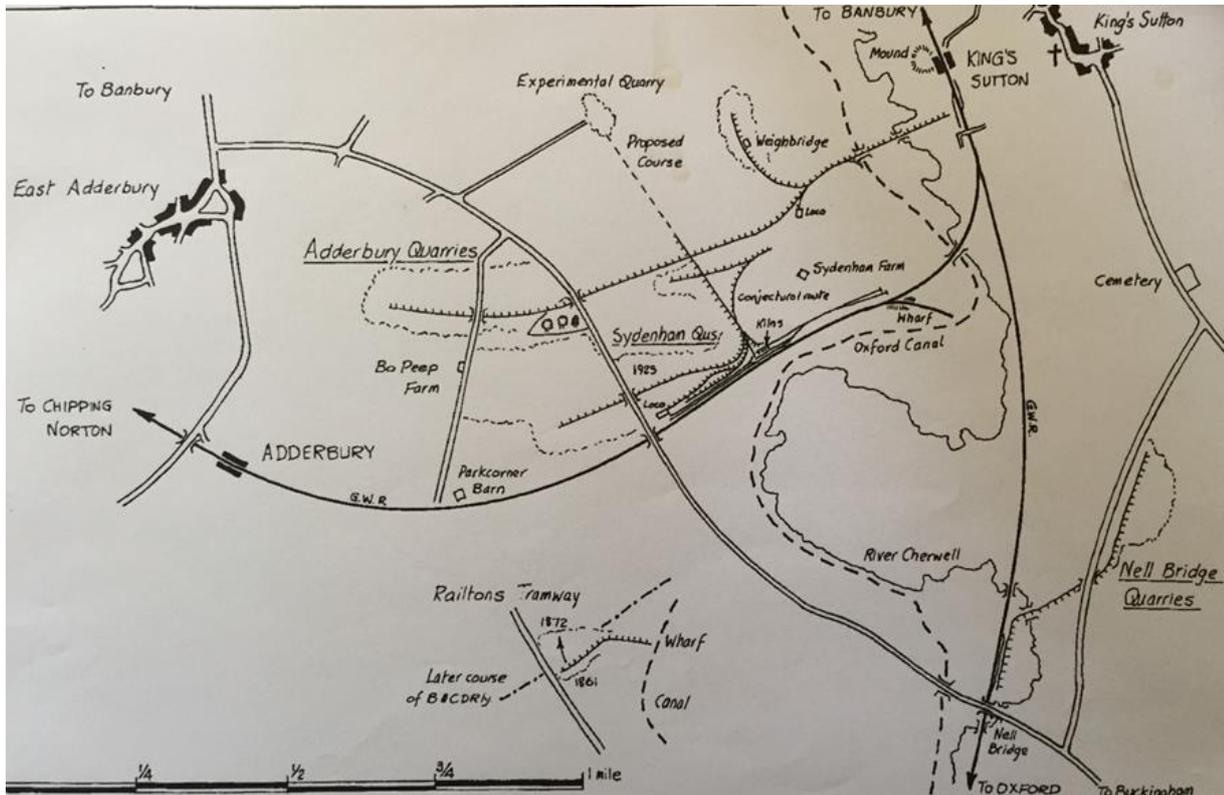
The first topics investigated included Aynho’s War Memorials, toll roads in the area and tunnels under Aynho.

One tunnel had been found in 1995 in the garden of St Michael’s House by accident due to the entrance cover collapsing. In 2009 this tunnel was opened up, and Brian and the secretary had gone down and examined it. It was very well built. A group visited from Oxford University Archaeological Society, led by an Archaeological Professor, and he declared that it was almost certainly built during the Civil War by soldiers to give them a job to do rather than raping and pillaging the countryside. He also said that the columns holding up Aynhoe Park House were definitely of Norman origin. A further tunnel was opened up when a digger fell into it while the drive at Aynhoe Park was extended to the new car park. Zetica geophysics experts surveyed sections of the older parts of the village and there are clear signs of further tunnels, their report is in the Society archive.

### Sydenham Quarries ~ Pete Brookfield

Pete submitted his research on the local iron stone quarries to The Banbury Historical Society in 2009, and had won first prize for local research projects.

The principle quarries were situated in the area that is now occupied by Banbury Business Park, Bo Peep Farm and the Hospice. adjacent to what used to be the Banbury to Cheltenham branch of the Great Western railway. Sydenham was named after a farm of the same name on high ground bounded by a loop of the Oxford Canal.



Mining of iron ore started here in 1914, accelerated by wartime pressure to increase metal production, and the quarries increased in size particularly up to 1917. They were equipped with 5 calcining kilns up to 60 feet high. Steam-driven lifts conveyed the ore to the top of the kilns. These dried the ore over 3 days to remove water and impurities such as lime and phosphates, which were drawn off for fertilisers. The remaining ore, now much lighter, was then sent by train to the Springvale furnaces at Bilston. The resultant smoke and steam must have been more reminiscent of the Black Country than our rural countryside.

Output from the neighbouring Adderbury quarry, the main source of ironstone for Sydenham, was initially taken the short distance by the Oxford Canal, which ran nearby the kilns. Later four small locomotives were purchased to do this.

A 20-ton navy, or excavator, was bought in 1915, but proved difficult as so much rubbish was also loaded. Hand-loading was preferred. This was back-breaking and dangerous work, the men had remove the soil, hack out the ore, and then wheel it in barrows, often along narrow plank runs to the railway wagons. Wages were very poor – for extracting 20 tons per day a man received no more than 4 (old) pence per ton.

Sydenham quarries were shut down in 1925, as the employer Alfred Hickman had acquired large tracts of land elsewhere. The track was lifted around 1930, and the kilns and sheds were dismantled in 1932. Two of the locomotives were scrapped, and two were preserved, one being fully restored is on a narrow guage railway in Leighton Buzzard.

Extracts from Ted Humphris's book "Garden Glory" ~ Keith McClellan,

Ted's books are a perfect entre into the life and times of Edwardian Aynho, its challenges and humour.

## John Fulcher – a soldier who worked in Aynho during World War Two ~ Peter Cole

Forgotten by many, Ryelands and Aynhoe Park estate became one of Britain's biggest fuel dumps on the run up to D Day. This was remembered in minutes posted to the village web site in 2007.

Within days, John Fulcher, who had worked in the camp made contact. He visited several times and his recollections are recorded.

Every day several train-loads of petrol were delivered to sidings specially built to the north of Aynho Station. Most of their petrol came from Fawley, near Southampton, but some came from Wales. John was in the Royal Army Service Corps with 88 others. They had 10 articulated flatbed Scammell lorries, each of which could hold 250 round drums or rectangular jerrycans containing 4 gallons of petrol.

The Offices were billeted in Aynho Park while the men lived in Nissen huts. Occasionally cans fell off the lorries as they came up the Deddington road, so they had to stop and pick them up, as every one had to be accounted for. When they reached the Aynhoe Park Lodge (the main access point) the lorries used newly built concrete roads to move through the woods. They offloaded the cans using chain rollers, and built "haystacks" about the size of a bungalow each containing 1000 barrels or jerrycans. No attempt was made to camouflage the stacks

As and when the local Army units required petrol they would send a requisition to Aynho, and the appropriate number of cans would be sent down to the railway station to be sent out to the nearest station to where they were required. Whereas the incoming loads were large, the outgoing ones were all much smaller. As far as possible the oldest cans were sent out first.

Each of the stacks had to be inspected regularly, and squashed or leaking ones replaced. In addition to the RASC group there were a similar number of Pioneer Corps men at Aynho. They were labourers, and did more mundane work, such as building concrete roads, cooking & cleaning duties, etc. There were almost 200 soldiers in Aynhoe Park altogether, the numbers falling as the fuel was moved south in the run up to D Day in June 1944. The remaining Nissen huts housed Aynho families until The Glebe housing was built.

### **Forthcoming Meetings**

Wednesday 29th November - A G M and a delve into the Archive and new research and archaeological finds.