

MINUTES OF THE 18th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT AYNHO VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 29TH APRIL 2009



Brackley Women's Institute Committee.



Aynho Village.

Images from a photograph album 1924

Present: – Brian Reynolds – Chairman, Peter Cole – Secretary. 45 other members and guests attended.

Brian welcomed everybody to the best-attended meeting ever of the Society.

He mentioned that one of our founder members, Brian Box, had sadly died recently. Despite being too ill to attend any meetings this year, he had insisted on paying his membership fee, so the Chairman had decided to donate it to the charity suggested by his widow.

1. Correspondence

The secretary had received one email asking where the book “The Recipe for Me” by Betty Humphries could be obtained, to which he had sent a reply.

2. Chair and Finance Report

There is £710.37 in the bank account.

There is one invoice that was approved, covering the above donation, and a display cabinet that will be used to put on view some of Gerald’s artefacts at two exhibitions later this year.

We will be attending the Brackley History Society Exhibition (June 6th at Brackley Town Hall) and Aynho Church Fete (June 13th in Aynhoe Park), and will be able to have a stand at each, to display items and also possibly to attract new members.

Both our two projects about the Aynho tunnels and the Sydenham quarries are being submitted to the BHS Research Projects tomorrow.

Regarding Tom Townsend and the Haynes and Borton families, he visited Aynho recently.

Subsequently Brian was told about a set of six books written in 1980 held by Aynho Church, which are entitled “The Ancestry of Anthony Morris Johnson”, who was a direct descendant of the original Aynho Haynes who left for America in 1682.

There is now a new Aynho Website - www.aynho.org.uk. Brian and Peter will be able to input items direct in future. People will have to register on this site to view it.

John Fulcher has sent a letter giving more details about his war years in Aynho.

Aynho Tunnels Project Update

Wendy Morrison OUAS

Sadly Brian had received a phone call from Wendy late this afternoon, advising that her son had had an accident at school, and she had been called to attend, so she would be unable to come this evening. She will attend the May meeting.

The Cartwright Papers

**Sarah Bridges & Dr. Jim McDermott
Northamptonshire County Archives**

Sarah Bridges, the Northamptonshire County Council Archivist, said that she had been told in 2006 that the Cartwright Archive, which had been held on loan by the County Council for 50 years, had been offered for sale, and she had 18 months to raise £300,000 or it would be lost to an American university.

Lady Juliet Townsend set up a Committee, The Cartwright of Aynho Archive Trust, to organise a fund to save it, and there was a great deal of local interest, which supported the campaign. The Cartwright of Aynho Archive is now owned by the County. It is a unique and irreplaceable collection, and she wants to make it accessible to all, and that is why the Archive Trust has engaged Dr. Jim McDermott to catalogue all the documents and to make sure that all the information therein is made available.

There are 317 boxes of papers, covering the years from 1250 to 1954. It is important to understand how important and influential the Cartwrights were. They were all either MPs, diplomats or high-ranking soldiers, so there is a huge range of information. We have a lot of detail about Aynhoe Park, the house itself, and for example the refurbishment of Aynhoe Park in 1691 by William Archer, giving details of what was paid to whom for work done. That is the real value of the Archive. There is a lot of information about the Civil War, such as a muster book for example, when a Cartwright was Deputy Lieutenant of the County. They were MPs for almost 200 years, so there are election papers and addresses. All this information is being catalogued, and most will be made available on-line in due course.

At this point Sarah introduced Dr. Jim McDermott, who has been taken on to do the cataloguing, etc.

Dr. McDermott said he had been working on the collection since last September. Some of it is in a logical order, other parts are not. So his first job is to get everything into some sort of order. The

earliest documents are legal ones, showing the way the estate came together. This was largely due to marriages, since the provision of dowries meant that land was often added to or taken away from the main estate on such an event. One of these, relating to the marriage of Thomas Cartwright to Armine Crewe in the early 1700s includes lands dating back to 1409. There is one distinct period from 1847 to 1851, which is significant, with two whole boxes of documents, and it is this period that Nicholas Cooper relied on heavily for some of his details, as it gives a good idea of the estate's expenses. When farms changed hands it was important to know exactly how much each was worth at that time.

Unlike the earlier records the 19th century documents do not show what amounts were paid to individuals. The reason for this is that at that time an estate agent was engaged, and he alone kept all the details. Occasionally there were disputes with troublesome tenants, and quite a lot of correspondence was created. There are some military papers. During the Napoleonic era, William Ralph Cartwright was responsible for the Brackley Battalion. He helped to organise and maintain it, and kept the company accounts, which are all available.

There are a great many political papers, as William Ralph was an MP for almost 50 years, and his grandson, William Cornwallis, more or less ran across the political spectrum, starting out as a Liberal, changing to a Liberal Unionist, and towards the end of his life almost becoming a Conservative Unionist. In the case of the former we have the full majesty, glory and corruption of local government, including details of all his expenses, such as beer & pies for his voters. William Cornwallis was very well respected by people such as Gladstone himself, and knew nearly everyone in parliament.

Regarding diplomatic papers, Sir Thomas reported back in great detail on the attempted breakaway of the Belgians from Holland. He then moved to Frankfurt, and reported how Prussia was gradually subsuming all the powers to itself. Later on he was promoted as ambassador to Stockholm. Later Fairfax Leighton Cartwright became ambassador to Vienna, during one of the most important moments in British history. While he was First Minister at the Munich delegation in 1907, he copied dispatches, which are now unique, as the originals have been lost.

The largest part of the collection is personal correspondence, detailing the minutiae of everyday life. Post 1850 there are lots of photographs. There are portraits, views of Aynho Park, the village and the estate. Fairfax was a keen photographer, and his pictures include many from foreign parts, such as Persia and Mexico. There are a lot of Revd. Fred Cartwright, probably because he was a very slow mover, and as photos of that time needed very long exposures, he was an ideal candidate.

Dr. McDermott then went on to concentrate on the second half of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th, up to the First World War, mainly because this is the period he has so far spent most time on. There is more here about how the Cartwrights interacted with the village. William Ralph Cartwright ran up huge debts, mainly on playing the stock market, which he did very badly. Sir Thomas increased the debt, but only lived three years beyond his father, so William Cornwallis, inherited the debt. He couldn't afford to live in Aynho, so being half German by birth, and speaking four languages fluently, he tended to live abroad most of the time. Aynho was rented out and played a relatively small part in his life. Things changed in 1881, when Uncle Edgcote Fairfax died childless, and left most of this money to the Aynho Cartwrights. Suddenly William Cornwallis was able to pay off a large part of the debt. There are lots and lots of correspondence to and from the Cartwrights during this period. It is significant that there were a great many Germans, who were not at all happy about how Germany was developing under Bismarck. William did his very best to stop Germany and Prussia from unifying, but unfortunately without success. In 1914 many friendly Germans expressed regret at having to say goodbye to him.

During this time there is relatively little about the Aynho estate, except what the Cartwrights were taking out of it. These amounts inevitably reduced over time, and the finances worsened. William Cornwallis kept every single receipt, and this is a good window on life then. There are many postcards of Aynho scenes, some from the Coronation of Edward VII, and photos of a village sports day, showing women in large hats with fixed expressions on their faces, including (in Box 46) a small collection of female nudes, and scrapbooks, which Tory Cartwright ladies were particularly fond of, mainly about the Primrose League. There are invitations such as to the interment of Edward VII in 1910, and an invitation to attend the requiem mass for Arch-Duke Franz

Ferdinand in 1914, which of course was not taken up.

Regarding finances, from 1874 Britain was in the grip of an agricultural depression; rents went down and so of course did the Cartwright's income. In 1888 Thomas Cartwright calculated that expenses exceeded income by £1800. To some extent this was offset by income from family properties in London, but the mortgage debt was still rising, so it was decided to up the life insurance policies on Fairfax Cartwright to a total of £80,000, a huge sum, probably 2 to 3 million pounds in today's money.

For the last years of his life William Cornwallis lived a sort of gipsy life in Europe. He was quite sickly, yet lived to be 91. He was a great friend of the Browning family. He had four children. Wanda the eldest was a strange person who settled in Florence. She had a ferocious temper, and died in 1901 from pneumonia. The second child was Thomas, who was also enigmatic. He settled down to a hunting, fishing and shooting life. His diary records every fly he used and every fish he caught, and details of every hunt he attended. He was a magistrate. He was a loner and expressed no personal feelings in his diaries at all. In 1896 he went to Canada, and blew his brains out. Fairfax went into the diplomatic service, and after serving in several European posts, in 1907 he was appointed First Minister to the Munich Legation, where his dispatches were very well thought of. He was knighted in 1908, and posted as ambassador to Vienna. This was one of the most important postings in the world at that time, because Britain knew it could not influence German policy, but hoped it could change Austria's views. Fairfax predicted Germany's ambitions very well. With the help of the French ambassador, Philippe Crozier, he attempted to weaken Austria's reliance on Germany. There was one episode in 1911, which could have changed the history of the world. Austro-Hungary wanted to modernise their armed forces, and strangely asked the French to supply a huge loan to help it to do this. The French were against this, as they were not part of the Triple Alliance. With Crozier Fairfax realised that Austro-Hungary were opposed to the German Alliance, so they tried to change the French mind to support Austro-Hungary. If they had succeeded the First World War might not have happened. In 1913 Fairfax wrote "Some day Serbia will set Europe by the ears and bring about a universal war on the continent." He was astute enough to realise that Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand was a certifiable maniac, and was definitely not fit to inherit his father's empire, and told his government so.

Fairfax turned the British embassy in Vienna from an undistinguished one into one of the most fashionable. He married Maria Chigi, a beautiful Italian from a noble family. In 1911 she inadvertently nearly started the First World War early, when she was dancing with the Austrian Foreign Minister, and the Russian ambassador cut in, starting a vicious feud between the two men. Fairfax also wrote one book, a three-volume fictional work, which related seedy adulteries among faintly disguised figures in high society. 1500 were printed, but following entreaties from all his friends in diplomatic circles that the book should be withdrawn immediately, he managed to get most copies back, and dumped them in the Park House.

The youngest daughter, Roma, became the companion of William Cornwallis during his later years and died of a heart attack in 1907.

There is little material in the collection later than this. During the Second World War Richard Cartwright and his family were evacuated to America. Later Beatrice Cartwright (one of the Edgcote Cartwrights) became Mayor of Brackley. There are 3 boxes of her correspondence. Brian thanked both Sarah and Jim for their detailed presentation.

In response to questions it was stated that so far there is no reference to the church clock and carillon.

It is hoped that all this material will be put on-line, and search engines will enable people to examine individual documents.

It is possible that Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett has some personal correspondence, etc.

It was agreed that the full address of the County Council's Records Office should be included in the Minutes of this meeting. It is: -

Northamptonshire County Council
Records Office
Wootton Hall Park
Northampton
NN4 8BQ

Tel: 01604 – 762129

Groups of up to 20 people are allowed to visit the Records Office by appointment to view documents.

Once the cataloguing is complete, it is intended that small exhibitions of items from the Archive will be sent to local schools and libraries, and obviously Aynho will be high on that list.

Peter Cole, in his capacity of Hon. Secretary of the Cartwright of Aynho Archive Trust, said that Sarah had played down the part she herself had played in securing the Archive. He said that in fact she had not only spent many long hours in preparing the submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund, but she had often worked late into the night, refining it and updating it. It is all down to Sarah that the full lottery funding was secured, and he asked for a round of applause to acknowledge her efforts. This was readily agreed.

Sarah invited everyone to look at a few examples they had brought from the Archive.

5. AOB

None.

6. Forthcoming Meetings

May 27th	Aynho Tunnels Project Update Lark Rise To Candleford	Wendy Morrison OUAS Martin Greenwood
June 24th	Visit to Croughton Church (7.00 pm)	Revd. Terry Richards
July 29th	Visit to The Quaker Meeting House in Adderbury	Nick Allen
August	No meeting	
September 30th	AGM Britain's Canals - Past & Present	Peter Cole