

MINUTES OF THE 24th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD IN THE APRICOT ROOM, CARTWRIGHT HOTEL ON WEDNESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2009

Present: – Brian Reynolds - Chairman
Peter Cole – Secretary.

36 members and guests attended.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Messrs Clark, Latham, McClellan and Mrs Sermon.

2. Correspondence

Peter Cole

The Secretary reported that regarding the 1914 postcard he had told the person contacting him that he had asked everyone at the AGM if they knew of any Thomson relatives. He mentioned that if no one could be found he had been authorised to see if he could buy the postcard for our archives, which had been on display at the AGM. This person had immediately sent him the postcard without charge, on the understanding that if any relative were traced, it would be offered to them if they wished to have it. Peter had thanked him and readily agreed.

The postcard is in pristine condition, but whereas the original email had referred to the sender as A Thomson, the signature is clearly A Thompson. Fresh checks of all available census record had still not revealed anyone of that name. An amendment will have to be put in the January newsletter.

When we visited Mrs Cartwright-Hignett the secretary had given her a copy of our minutes when Dr Jim McDermott gave his findings of the Cartwright papers. She wrote to Brian pointing out an error (now corrected) that she and her brother were sent to America during the war, but not her parents who stayed here. Throughout the war her father worked on Northamptonshire County Council. He was a JP, and was High Sheriff in 1942. A letter has been received from the Village Hall Committee acknowledging the £450 gift we have passed on towards a piano. John Fulcher has very kindly sent a gift of a further £100 for Aynho History Society.

3. Finance Report 2009

Ian Parkes

The Treasurer reported that current funds stand at £596.55. Only minor expenses are due now. It was explained that it was not proposed to put the Treasurer on the list of people able to draw out cash at this stage, since this would necessitate closing the account and opening a new one, but at least one of the officers originally authorised in addition to Brian ought to visit the Bank with identity details to have a second person able to make withdrawals.

4. Chairman's Report

Brian Reynolds

Brian reminded everyone that subscriptions would be due at the next meeting at the end of January.

Banbury Historical Society has invited us to attend their April meeting to give a brief report on the topics we have examined so far.

On Saturday 5th December we have been invited to attend Fringford Village Hall at 12.30, where they are planning an event to raise money for a plaque to commemorate author of Lark Rise to Candleford Flora Thompson's association with the village.

Brian said that we must think of an appropriate way to spend the very generous gift of £100 from John Fulcher. He reminded new members of John's association with Aynho, where he served for several years during the War.

One of the visits for next year could be to Rousham House, but they have asked us to make it at a weekend.

5. The Art & History of Middleton Cheney Church

Bob Hunter

History of the Church

All Saint's Church Middleton Cheney is a typical 13th or 14th century church. Both Aynho and Middleton Cheney parishes started off in Saxon times in the diocese of Lincoln. The Bishop's Seat was moved to Dorchester in the time of the Viking raids in 971, but returned to Lincoln after the

Norman Conquest in 1072. The Domesday Book shows a priest, which indicates that there would have been a church in Middleton. William the Conqueror gave his lieutenants various small parcels of land all well separated, so that none of them could easily raise up an army to oppose him.

The name Cheney, and the local Chenderit School are derived from Ralph de Chenduit who originated from Chenedouit, a village with a châteaux just south of Caen. Not far away was St Evroult Abbey, which received the church tithes from this part of England. The nobleman who was given the region including Middleton was Hugh de Grendemaisnil, who helped rule England after William's death, and was buried at St Evroult Abbey. It is recorded in the Rolls of Bishop Oliver Sutton, who was Bishop of Lincoln from 1280 to 1300 and held land in the Banbury area, that in AD 1298 when Master Walter of Warmington succeeded at Middleton Church, he found that his predecessor had left many notable defects in the chancel and Rectory, which suggests that there may have been an earlier church than the present one, which was built in 1302. In the chancel is a figurehead wearing a bishop's mitre, which is almost certainly Bishop Sutton, who was a regular visitor to Banbury.

Bob produced a list of early priests at Middleton from 1180 to 1509. One of them William de Edyngdon, who later became Bishop of Winchester, and then Chancellor of England, was much involved with the building of the present Church. Another, Sir Wynot Chamberlayne, may be an ancestor of George W Bush.

In the Church can be seen a piscina (where the priest washed his hands after delivering the sacrament) dating prior to 1296, a treasury chest of 1302, and a rare octagonal font from a period from 1300 to 1320. This was at the time of the Wycliffe Bible, the first one to be written in English. The Clerestory and tall spire were added around 1450. Buttresses had to be added to the tower to support the spire.

There is a roof painting, believed to be mediaeval, of Jesus and the Disciples at the Last Supper.

The original south door survives from about 1550 and has an inner door. All the nails have been bent over, possibly having been crafted by a ship builder. A tenor bell cast in Chacombe was added in 1680. Tombs in the churchyard date from 1685. Before 1850 there were very few pews in the Church. Mostly there were family boxes and a balcony.

Art in the Church

The most influential figure was William Morris, some of whose early work is in this Church. His figurehead is cast in stone on the north side of the aisle. The wife of Madox Brown, Emma, is modelled as a stone angel at the west end of the choir. Most of the Morris team were involved with the great East Window. The window shows humanity at different stages of history, above is the heavenly host depicted by the twelve tribes of Israel. Then at the top are the twenty kings of the earth surrounding the Lamb upon the Throne. All the people face towards the centre of this window. Your vision is drawn upwards to the Lamb upon the Throne. William Morris designed intricate details for the roof of the church, which was actually painted by Mr Cotram of Banbury. It is the oldest surviving ceiling designed by William Morris in the world. The main west window is by Burne-Jones, and depicts scenes from the Books of Daniel and the story of the Heavenly Children who were cast into the fiery furnace, but could not be harmed by it. The Six Days of Creation together with the Archangels, with Adam and Eve, reflect the song of creation being sung by the Princes of Israel in the fire below. Other windows on the south wall are by Powell of Whitefriars.

Two unusual items are the Opus Sectiles, which are similar to marquetry pictures but made out of numerous pieces of inlaid coloured stone. There are only seven of these in English churches, and Middleton has two of them. More recently there are 160 tapestry cushions or kneelers depicting objects in the Church. One particular cushion in the only remaining box pew depicts the Horton Hospital. Mrs Horton lived in Middleton, and made a fortune out of elastic stockings. She left a

large sum in her will to create a hospital in Banbury, the only conditions being that from the hospital windows you must be able to see the whole of the spire of Middleton Cheney Church, and that two of the beds should always be laid aside for Middleton Cheney residents.

In response to questions Bob said that the Church is best seen on a bright summer's day, but the interior is unusually light, due to the pale Hornton stone used. It is open any time during daylight hours, but you have to get the key from the nearby cottage. In response to a further question, Bob said that William Morris used a distemper paint for the ceiling, and it is now in poor condition. It would take an enormous sum to repair these painted ceilings to the satisfaction of English Heritage.

Brian thanked Bob Hunter very much for his interesting talk.

6. Aynho Tunnel Research Update

Brian Reynolds

Brian said that on 5th November half a dozen people entered the original tunnel discovered in 1995.

It was rather disappointing, since it was only about 20 metres long, and completely blocked up at both ends. The tunnel itself is well constructed, and did not need airing, as there was no bad air. At the southern end it appears that the tunnel may turn right, but it would be a major job to remove all the stone blocking it. At one point a brick bridge runs across the tunnel to support a water or drainage pipe, presumably put in some time in the late 1800s/early 1900s. The rounded top of the tunnel is cemented, but the main part is just dry stone walling. It would appear that over the years a good deal of rain water and soil has drained through, as the floor is earth, and excavation at one point revealed that the original stone floor is some two feet below. The blockages at both ends have been much more roughly constructed. Brian said that it was hoped that some action could be taken on another tunnel soon. Samples of earth and stone have been removed from this one in case Oxford University Archaeological Society can date them.

7. A. O. B.

None.

8. Forthcoming Meetings

December No Meeting

9. Programme 2010

January 27th	The Cartwright Papers	Dr. Jim McDermott
February 24th	The Role of The Country Carrier	Martin Greenwood
March 31st	Memories of Aynho School	David Morgan
April 28th	Cartwrights at Edgcote House	Sally Strutt
May 26th	Those Coaching Days	Barry Smith
June 30th	Fringford Walk	Fringford
A Sat/Sunday in July	Rousham House & Gardens	Rousham
August	No Meeting	
September 29th	Non-Conformity in 19c. Rural Oxfordshire	Martin Greenwood
October 27th	AGM	
November 24th	Aynho Viaduct	Peter Brookfield
December	No Meeting	