

MINUTES OF THE 26th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD IN AYNHO VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2010

Present: – Brian Reynolds - Chairman
Peter Cole – Secretary.
Ian Parkes – Treasurer

Altogether 39 members and guests attended.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from Mr & Mrs Blok, Mr & Mrs Maddocks-Born, Messrs Berrill and Bradford and Mrs Watkins.

2. Correspondence

Peter Cole

The Secretary said that for the second month running he had received a request for information about early family members. This time it was a retired teacher from Sussex, who had learned that her grandfather was a railway signalman at Oxford in 1901, but had been born in Aynho.

Her great grandfather Robert first appeared in the 1881 census. He was born in Adderbury, and married a girl from Great Rollright. They had a son, and then moved to Aynho, as their second son John (the signalman) age 4 in 1881 was born here. Robert was shown as a canal labourer.

By the time of the next census in 1891 Robert had been promoted to Wharf Manager, quite a responsible position. His children were John, now 14, Arthur 12 and Robert Charles 6.

1901 showed Robert was then a self-employed coal merchant. Both Arthur 22 and Robert Charles 16 were working in the family firm as coal merchants. There is no trace of John, but of course if he were now a signalman at Oxford, he would have had to move away.

The 1911 census doesn't have any details, but it shows the great grandfather, his wife and two male adults.

Peter produced a photograph of Aynho Wharf, taken in 1909, which shows the coal yard area. He also had one taken last year from which it could be seen that the coal wharf building is still there, now a canal-side shop. The initial design and canopy overhanging the canal have been retained.

He emailed this information and the photos to the teacher, and she was thrilled to receive so much information about her ancestors. He had also emailed Dawn Griffis to thank her very much for giving us this information. She has replied that she is gratified to know that the census is being useful. She is pleased the History Society is flourishing and wishes all members the very best.

3. Finance Report 2009

Ian Parkes

The Treasurer reported that funds currently stand at £1,250.97.

An invoice for Brian for £20.09 for various items relating to Aynho was approved.

4. Chairman's Report

Brian Reynolds

Brian said that the company Zetica have adopted Aynho as a project, and want to continue assisting regarding the tunnels at their own expense. Brian therefore proposed that the company be made an honorary member of the Society. This was agreed.

Brian also proposed that Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett, who has taken a great interest in our Society, also be made an honorary member. This was agreed.

Regarding an outing in July, it had been difficult to find a common date for a visit to Rousham House, which in any event is close enough for anyone to visit easily. Brian therefore proposed that we should find a group to do a Civil War re-enactment, possibly on 24th July, if this is convenient to all parties. He understands that James Perkins would be prepared to let this take place in the

grounds of Aynhoe Park. He had contacted three groups and had found that the prices varied considerably, from £45, to £300, to £1500. The middle one seemed quite reasonable. We could open this up, so that anyone from the village could attend, and if we make a profit, this could go to a local charity, if that was the general feeling.

5. Facebook Kevin Berrill

In Kevin's absence Brian said that the idea was that Facebook could be used as a popular addition to our village website to put out a list of future meetings for up to a year ahead, reports and photos, etc. It was agreed that this was a good idea, and Kevin was instructed to proceed.

6. **The Role of the Country Carrier** Martin Greenwood

Martin started off by saying that when he had been researching life in Banburyshire the existence of carriers had been a common theme. The more he looked at it, the more interesting it had become.

Roughly speaking Banburyshire is the area bounded in the north by the Edgehill escarpment, down to Hook Norton in the west, by the Deddington/Aynho/Buckingham road to the south (though he always included Juniper Hill and Fringford in this), and then north via Brackley back to the escarpment. Banbury being on several roads in all directions was an ideal centre for carriers.

Going back to the 1860s this was the last decade of prosperous farmers and so farm labourers. It was therefore also a good time for carriers. Good turnpike roads had a good deal to do with this. In 1860 William Borton took over from a Charlton man called Pipkin, who had been carrier for 40 years. John Dunn had also been a carrier in Aynho for many years.

Thursday has always been market day, and the busiest one was at Michaelmas. The carrier would have been up at dawn, collecting his horse, and harnessing it to his cart. He would make sure that he had got all his lists from villagers and from people in the surrounding countryside of items they wanted him to purchase for them. He would then head off on a two to three hour journey to Banbury.

Banbury was a main and convenient centre, where everyone would gather and deals were struck.

There he would sell any items he had been asked to, and buy the items on his list.

He would leave about 3 pm to come back to distribute all his purchases. Each carrier would be linked to a certain pub for stabling, and so that he could meet friends.

There was a distinction between local carriers and long-distance ones, who would travel between major centres, mostly with bulk goods and passengers. These would use much larger carts drawn by several horses, and they would often travel in small convoys, as there were still highwaymen about. In reality travelling on these stagecoaches was quite an ordeal, as it was extremely cold and very uncomfortable. By the 1830s over 50 coaches a week were leaving Banbury, including 22 to London, 19 to Birmingham and 12 to Oxford. The latter journey took seven hours.

These long-distance coaches suffered a good deal when the railway came along around 1850, but the local carriers were unaffected, and it was reported that 450 carriers a week were going into Banbury. Even in the 1890s considerable numbers were still operating.

Although there was little room, for a small charge they would often take a passenger or two into Banbury. It was the only form of public carriage at that time. Flora Thompson mentions a carrier, Jimmy Grantham. She said that apart from the occasional carriages and the carrier's cart twice a week, there was little traffic on the road through Lark Rise, but people would think nothing of

walking 7 miles to buy a reel of cotton or a packet of tea.

Martin produced a slide showing a list of carriers known to have been carrying to or from Aynho. This included John Rymill, who was well reported as having failed in the 1780s, owing money to many people and tradesmen. Others who were more successful include Pipkin from Charlton, and men named Jeffs, Gregory and Angel in the years prior to 1830. From the Aynho censuses Peter later confirmed that John Dunn was shown as a carrier in 1841, 1851 and 1861. Another in the later year was John Watson. A farmer, Frederick Borton, was also a carrier over part of the next 30 years, although his 16-year-old son, Thomas H Borton, is shown as the only one in 1881. A Walter Borton is shown in Martin Greenwood's records in 1903 and 1914, but his name does not appear in either the 1901 or 1911 censuses, which do not mention a carrier at all, so it looks as though he did not live in the village.

Millions of horses were lost in the First World War, and this, together with the coming of the motorbus, virtually finished off the carriers' trade, although some adapted army lorries or buses and continued until the 1950s.

Martin produced a photo of an 82-year-old carrier with an extremely tall top hat, taken in 1857, which showed that some were quite long-lived.

Very few carriers' records have been found, and it is likely that some could not even read or write, and just kept their lists etc, in their heads. One thing that has survived is a certificate presented by the mayor of Banbury to a Thomas Hortin for 30 years of faithful service as a carrier.

Regarding the functions of a carrier, first and foremost they were shopping agents. They would pay for the goods initially, and then put a penny or two on when they handed them over back at the village. Communities were much closer in those days, and it is unlikely that there were many bad debts.

Then of course there was the connection with the railways, delivery of bulky goods or parcels, etc. Very few things would travel more than 20 miles.

So far as numbers of carriers was concerned, in 1850 it was estimated that there were about 80,000, and by 1901 it was 273,000. In some villages the carriers job was handed down in one family for a great many years. They had to either own or rent a field for the horse, so the carrier might be a small- holder or farmer on the days when he was not carrying, or his wife might run a small shop.

To sum it up, Martin said that the carriers were almost like a glue in the society, in that they knew everyone in a village, and all their family circumstances, and what was going on all the time. Their PR must have been very good.

It was noted that the railways eventually provided their own delivery service for parcels, etc., up to Aynho village.

Although the Banbury Thursday market was the busiest, carriers might also go to Bicester or Buckingham, and later on many worked five days a week.

Brian thanked Martin for his informative talk.

7. A. O. B.

Brian thanked Marjorie Tolchard for archiving and cataloguing a collection of documents.

8. Forthcoming Meetings

March 31st
April 28th

Memories of Aynho School
The Cartwrights at Edgcote

David Morgan
Sally Strutt