

**MINUTES OF THE 47th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT AYNHO VILLAGE
HALL ON WEDNESDAY 30th APRIL 2012**

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

There were four apologies.

1. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Rupert asked how many people would be interested attending the May Day events on the Sports Field on 7th May, and in visiting Adderbury on 18th June.

2. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Peter announced that the only new correspondence this month had been a telephone call from an American on a narrowboat on the Thames. She had visited Aynho and had spoken to Graham Gibbs. Her husband is a direct descendant of a Henry Borton, who emigrated to Canada in 1841, aged 25. She had some information about the family, and Peter was able to add some details to this. In the end, since Borton is one of the most common names in the Aynho censuses, he decided to construct a complete list of all known family members, using a different colour for each branch of the family. She was very grateful for the information, and said she hoped to visit Aynho again soon.

The person who had been planning to come to Aynho last week, called to say that he would now be coming later in the year.

A third person descended from the Seccull family is also planning to visit, so Peter has been preparing a definitive guided tour of Aynho, using information gleaned from as many sources as possible, giving just about all the available information about the history of our village and its houses.

3. The Civil War in Oxfordshire

Martin Greenwood

Martin started off by showing a picture of Prince Rupert, who was the commander of the Royalist cavalry during the Civil War. Having had previous battle experience, he was supreme in this. He was someone whom Martin had always admired, because he had a sort of dash, a panache about him, and he cut a glittering figure. He fought in the first major battle of the war at Edgehill in October 1642. His cavalry charge completely routed the Parliamentarians, but he rather got carried away and pursued them too far from the battlefield, losing the chance to inflict a decisive defeat on the main army.

After the battle King Charles set up his headquarters at Oxford. London was vulnerable at this point and Rupert, if he had had the authority, would probably have gone there directly.

During the first Civil War from 1642 to 1645 much of the action happened locally, as the area was a buffer zone between the two sides. There was a battle at Cropredy Bridge on 29th June 1644, when the Royalists won a victory over the Parliamentarians under William Waller. After this defeat most of Waller's army melted away and went home. However, most of the warfare was guerrilla-style with minor skirmishes, for example, at Compton Wynyates.

Martin recommended an excellent book about the War by Richard Ollard "This War without an Enemy".

Broughton Castle became a secret meeting place for Parliamentarians (who were all very opposed to the King's Ship Tax) to plot their battles of the Civil War. John Hampden and William Fiennes, 8th Lord Saye and Sele, whose nickname was "Old Subtlety", were amongst these plotters. There is a

hidden secret room at the top of the Castle, known as ‘The room that hath no ears’, of which it was said: “Nobody could have found it”.

On the Royalist side one of the main policy makers was Lord Falkland. Born Lucius Cary, he was an author and politician who sat in the House of Commons from 1640 to 1642. In 1625 he inherited from his grandfather the manors of Great Tew and Burford. At Great Tew he enjoyed a short but happy period of study, and he assembled a cultured circle, known as the Circle of Tew, which attracted influential people from the university and elsewhere, who came to enjoy his brilliant qualities and the lovely atmosphere of the house. There was a sort of magic about the place. He felt it his duty to take part on the side of King Charles I as a volunteer, but he spoke against the exaction of ships money on 7 December 1640. So far as the Church was concerned he urged a compromise between the Royalist and Parliamentarian propositions, but this was no time for compromises. Having had his ideals and hopes destroyed, he became very disillusioned. At the first Battle of Newbury he virtually committed suicide by advancing into the enemy’s fire and was killed.

King Charles had a very high idea of his own status. He was a poor judge of men. Scottish and Irish problems abounded. A lot of autocratic and ineffective rulings came from Whitehall.

Charles managed for eleven years without any Parliament at all. Religion was a factor. Many people thought that Charles was a closet Catholic. Archbishop Laud was in favour of ceremonial and High Church policies. Men such as Pym and Hampden didn’t like this, and had Laud executed.

Martin then showed a portrait of Oliver Cromwell, warts and all.

Charles raised his standard in Nottingham. The Parliamentarians were coming from London. The main Royalist supply routes were from the north-west. We were in the buffer zone between the two sides. The Royalists had to defend Banbury, and it held out until May 1646. It was all very bloodthirsty and violent. Richard Baxter, a Puritan church leader and theologian, wrote that ‘the war began in our streets before the King or Parliament had any armies’.

London to Coventry and Coventry to Gloucester were main Parliamentarian supply routes, with Buckingham right in the centre. They controlled Coventry, Kennilworth, Rockingham, Warwick, Brackley and Northampton. All the rest was Charles’s.

Many soldiers went home for the winter. It was reckoned that at Edgehill there had been thirty thousand men on the battlefield, with some 1,500 casualties.. The pressure on the local population was terrible. Both sides were pillaging, and with families feuding, many took a chance to settle old scores. Puritan William Purefoy of Compton Wynyates was particularly ruthless in enforcing his views by terrorising people living in his area. Gangs roamed the district. Banbury raided far and wide for food, etc. Prince Rupert took hundreds of horses after Edgehill. Constables went round collecting taxes, and took goods if no money was available. Villagers suffered greatly as they were often paying to both sides. In addition both sides were always on the look out for men to replace those who were injured or had deserted. Horses were much in demand, and as a result of many being taken, there were insufficient left for ploughing, so some farmers went bankrupt due to this. All straw bedding was taken from Bicester. Plagues and other epidemics also led to great loss of life.

Plundering of churches was prevalent, as the Puritans were opposed to stained glass, coloured chuch paintings, and any signs of opulence, such as silver plates or chalices, etc. and stripped churches where ever they could. John Harris, a carpenter in Adderbury, ripped up the church prayer book and bible.

Most battles were just close skirmishes really. However death rates trebled, particularly in larger towns such as Thame, Witney, Banbury and Henley. An enormous number of soldiers who were not killed in battle died later from infected wounds. Often these were inflicted by their own weapons misfiring or ammunition explosions.

After the Battle of Cropredy the words “From Civil War God deliver us” was carved on one of the bridges over the river. It has been preserved on the new bridge.

Banbury was a byword for Puritanical zeal. The siege had a disasterous effect.

Brackley and Buckingham were good for horses, and Osney for gunpowder.

Royalists were based at Aynho in John Cartwright’s house in his absence in London. The Earl of Essex, commander of the Roundheads, who always carried his coffin around with him just in case, was on his way to Gloucester with six regiments. At one point he had 5,000 men garrisoned at Souldern. You can see from this how damaged the countryside must have been. For a long time the besieged Royalists held out at Aynhoe Park, but after hearing of severe defeats by Parliamentarians

at Naseby, they left, burning down the House to prevent it falling into enemy hands. On his eventual return, John Cartwright applied for compensation, but it wasn't until many years later that his son actually received this.

What were the consequences of all this? A lot of ministers left at the time, although many came back after the Restoration. The poor were certainly poorer. Bishop Spratt said that the civil war had 'stirred up men's minds from long ease, & made them active & inquisitive for knowledge'. There was a much greater awareness of what was going on elsewhere.

The 1650s was a complicated time in that Cromwell didn't always have his way with what he wanted. However, he did manage to control the fanatics.

It is amazing how quickly everything went back to how it was before once King Charles II was put on the throne. The Interregnum just didn't work.

Rupert showed a coin of the realm and some lead bullets found in a field just south of Aynhoe Park House from that time. He mentioned that one of his favourite books is "Mad Dogs and Englishmen" by Sir Ranulph Fiennes, covering the period from the Norman Conquest up to the Second World War.

It was noted that during the Civil War members of the same family, like the Verneys, were often on different sides.

Nick Allen said that on one occasion both armies had approached Warmington from different directions, without being aware of each other's presence.

It was suggested that perhaps Rainsborough Camp had played a part in the Civil War. Since then Peter has examined the minutes of a talk given about the Camp by Andrea Gladden. In her talk she said that Rainsborough Camp may have taken its name from Captain Rainsborough, who later became a Colonel, and was a prominent local Leveller during the Civil War, until he was assassinated in 1648. However there is no evidence that the Camp itself was ever involved in the Civil War.

Martin said that women frequently played a part in the War by defending their house while their husband was away fighting.

He added that "Old Subtlety" had played both sides against the middle, and had eventually become Lord Privy Seal.

Rupert thanked Martin for a very interesting talk.

4. Forthcoming Meetings

May 30th Upstairs – Downstairs at Aynhoe Park James Perkins

June 18th (Monday) Visit to Adderbury History Association

June 27th Aynho – A Military History, the heroes and horrors of 2000 years of conflict
Rupert Clark