

**MINUTES OF THE 48th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT AYNHOE PARK
HOUSE ON WEDNESDAY 30th MAY 2012**

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

1. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Rupert thanked James for allowing us to come to the Orangery for his talk. Rupert asked people who wished to visit Adderbury on 18th June for a History Walk to share cars as far as possible. Everyone should meet at Adderbury Church at 7.30. Most would walk around the village, but cars would be available for those unable to manage this.

2. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Banbury Historical Society has given advance notice of a prize in 2014 for the best piece of local historical research submitted by an individual or a village society. This is being announced early in the hope that local historians will start now to produce something suitable.

Peter said a person had contacted him from Glasgow, who was a relative of a soldier Andrew Buchan, who would have served with John Fulcher in Aynho from 1942 to 1944. Unusually he had brought his wife Margaret and young daughter Anne to live in a cottage in Aynho. He wanted to know if Peter could trace the address of this cottage. It is a pity he didn't contact him 6 or 7 months ago before John died.

Peter announced that the only other correspondence this month had been from Brian Reynolds. Martin Greenwood had notified that there would be a Beer Festival and Walks in Fringford on Saturday 9th June, for anyone who has not visited Flora Thompson's "Candleford Green".

Brian had also sent a series of photos from Bruce Smith who gave us a talk last year on Drove Roads. He hasn't had a chance to copy them yet, but most are just pictures of fields, and hedgerows drovers would have used in places like Oving and Grendon Underwood.

At our Maytime event in the Apricot Room of the Cartwright Hotel, a young couple who recently moved into a house on Roundtown asked him if he could get any information on the history of their house. Peter spoke to Sybil, who said that she had lived in the next-door house for about 20 years, so she agreed to contact them direct.

3. Upstairs – Downstairs at Aynhoe Park

James Perkins

James started off by pointing out that there is a new painting in the bar. It is a huge illustration of how it is thought the Park would have looked after Capability Brown had redesigned it in the late 1790s. It was painted recently by an artist friend of his, Mark Johnson, who completed it over three months. In the same room are four panels illuminated from behind by "Based Upon", a group of artists and designers. James thinks that they are worth a great deal now, but could come into fashion later. He knows the company, who normally specialise in artwork for super yachts.

Over the last year he has really opened up the House to various groups. In addition to our Society, the Country Land Owners' Association is having their AGM here today, talking about tax and insurance matters, etc.

He has hosted a number of weddings, birthday parties and fashion shows, which have included celebrities such as fashion designer Matthew Williamson and Kate Moss. The House has been

featured in a number of fashion magazines, both from England and abroad, such as Country Life, Vogue, Architects' Digest, and some from Italy, Germany and Russia.

One world-famous photographer, Mario Testino, who charges his clients one million pounds per day, spent three days here. The House has been used as a backdrop, and featured, which is great publicity and quite an honour for James, as well as providing some income to support his expanding collections.

Through this he has met people such as Jude Law, Sienna Miller, and photographers Rankin and Uly Weber. Photographers will be coming here again in soon for a very high-profile wedding.

One day James returned home from the pub, and there was a wedding going on, and he thought, "Gosh, perhaps I had too much cider because that looks like Richard Branson", but it was him!

Someone recalled seeing a plane flying a banner over the House recently. This was due to a wedding held here for Sir Alex Ferguson's right-hand man.

Last year the village was more or less closed down for an hour or two, with helicopters flying about. That was David Cameron and several members of the Cabinet attending a wake here.

Vivienne Westwood and Liam Gallagher are other names in the guest book.

James is hoping to open a medi spa in the House soon, which will be available for anyone to use should they wish to do so.

Another thing that should hopefully be welcome is that he is very close to finalising arrangements for a village shop in a building close to the Aynhoe House car park, which should soon become available.

There are parts of Aynhoe Park House, particularly in the wings, that James has never been in. James then turned to his plaster casts. He has at least four and a half thousand pieces. He is on the brink of getting a new collection, and upgrading to some other ones. He said that a lot of exhibits take up to six months to actually arrive at Aynho, due to problems with customs, import duty, etc. He might be auctioning some pieces soon. James is staging an auction in the House entitled "A Modern Day Grand Tour".

As he gets older his tastes change, so he is getting rid of a lot of black and white photographs. There were three television programs by an artist, Grayson Perry, on Channel 4 recently. A very clever chap, he has created six tapestries of what he calls the Tribes of England. James had a fleeting part in the third programme.

Another Channel 4 program to use the House was called "Four Rooms". This is a bit like a contemporary Antiques Roadshow, where you bring objects to sell, and you go from room to room trying to find the highest bidder. They might come back here.

Thomas Pink the shirt makers came here for their winter campaign, as they wanted a different backdrop. All these people want something that is unusual, quirky and fun yet classic.

One of the favourite items from his collection is part of a statue of Joan of Arc on horseback. Paul DuBois made the statue in about 1880. It came from a museum in New York. James likes it because the artist would have handled or made the plaster cast himself. It has discolouration marks that would have been egg white, used to bring out a patination onto the white surface.

Along the north wall is the West Pediment from the Temple of Zeus. It is actually teaching men to be more civilised by not drinking too much. A miniature version of this is under the main staircase.

Above this are casts of the Elgin Marbles. This is a good example of something that went out of fashion, and then came back in again. So far as the originals were concerned, due to pollution, erosion and the increase in travel and tourism, they became more and more disfigured, so that the plaster casts came into prominence again, as they were the only ones that showed all the original details. This is now a living museum, where everything can be seen. James has helped make these pieces fashionable again.

James then split the group into two. He took the first one up to see some upstairs rooms, while Jimmy Guthrie took the other first to see the library, then down to see the vast expanse of cellars.

James took us up to the first floor, past a huge elephant's head on the wall, and an old Punch and Judy cabinet. One of his best friends at school is the founder of Giffords Circus, so he knows them quite well.

