

MINUTES OF THE 50th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT ST. MICHAEL'S HOUSE, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 25th JULY 2012

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

1. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett has sent a reply to the last minutes, pointing out that it was one of William Ralph Cartwright's sons, who was in the battles of Waterloo. Sadly the story of the looting of the dinner service is a complete fiction. When the House was opened to the public, Elizabeth's father invented the story, as he did not know how the service came into the family. However Elizabeth has now translated Lili's diaries from the original German, and Lili described how it was given to her and her husband Sir Thomas Cartwright after their marriage by her uncle, the Duke of Rechberg. It had been commissioned by the King of Saxony, as a gift to the King of Bavaria, who had passed it on to the Duke of Rechberg.

Peter said that he had had two emails this month, both from America. One had been about the Mercer family, who had left Aynho for America in the 1670s. He found references to them in Nicholas Cooper's book on Aynho, and sent her details of these Quakers, who were persecuted here before leaving for America.

The second was from Lee Borton in Virginia enquiring about his ancestor John Borton, another Quaker. Coincidentally he was also mentioned in the very same passage of the book, so Peter sent him a similar reply. Both were well received.

Rupert pointed out that on our recent visit to Adderbury, which used to be a Quaker centre, he learned that they were very limited in what they could do. One thing was to make clocks. Quaker clocks are now quite rare and much sought after, and this time next year the Adderbury History Association are hoping to bring as many clocks as possible to the village for a Quaker Clock Festival, and there may well be more of these together than ever seen before.

2. St. Michael's House

Andrew Mills

Rupert thanked Andrew Mills for allowing us to come to St. Michael's House and garden.

Andrew started off by showing a series of photographs and prints of the house and the surrounding area.

He displayed a list of Aynho priests, which indicated that for a hundred years between 1830 and 1926 three Cartwrights were priests living in the House, when it was the Rectory.

Christopher Hodgson was the last rector to use the House.

A map of the village dated 1696 shows the House as The Parsonage. At that time it had a long wing on the northern side. The land on which the House was situated amounted to no less than five acres, which included what is now the Church car park, and land right up to the main road, where the Pediment is now. The Pediment cottage was once the coach house for the Rectory.

On the south side there was a gateway through to the churchyard to enable the vicar to get easily to his Church.

Andrew believes that the present House originated sometime around 1500 to 1600. It was remodelled in the early nineteenth century. The Church and Aynhoe Park are Grade 1 listed, and St. Michael's House is Grade 2.

The House consists of two storeys with cellars and an attic, and it has four bays going across the front. The doorway is quite elaborate with Tuscan pilasters, the fireplaces have Grecian decorations, and there are very old roof beams and purlins.

From a historical point of view, a building on the site was rated annually at sixteen pounds thirteen shillings and four pence in 1291, rising to twenty-six pounds in 1535. After dissolution it passed to Sir Thomas Audley, the Lord Chancellor. His grandson, Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk, who was the Lord Treasurer, sold it on for £300 to Richard Cartwright in 1618. In 1655 it was certified by the Parliamentary Commissioners to be worth £180 per annum.

The 1881 census shows that there were seven servants looking after the property.

Anne Usher remembered the layout of the rooms from when she first came to Aynho in 1965.

Andrew produced some memories by Sybil going back to wartime. These included a white balustrade between the current garden and The Pediment garden. There was an extensive box hedging in the Rectory garden. Where The Pediment garden is now, Sybil used to play tennis and netball. There was a sunken garden and a vegetable garden. Most of the northern wing was demolished in the 1960s. She would always go to the back door, which would be opened by the maid, who was Annie May. She was the most faithful person, who always wore a uniform. The old Butler's pantry was where Sybil first started producing the village newsletter in 1964 on stencils and a Gestetner machine.

There were photos taken some years ago from the Church tower roof. Most were of the House and gardens, which included the part that existed before the Pediment was built there, but some showed the building that used to house the fire engine. This of course burned down, with the fire engine still inside, so that it couldn't be used to put out the fire.

There were also more recent photos of the House interior from 1987.

Andrew and Vanessa arrived at the House in 1995.

There was some general discussion about a well in the garden, and three dry closets, and a reference to the hole, where a young son had fallen through into a tunnel below, luckily not injuring himself.

Then Andrew and Vanessa each took a group around the ground floor of the House, looking especially at the fireplaces and scrolls on a staircase, before going on a tour of the present gardens. Everyone admired the beautiful flower beds, and the immaculate lawn areas, before enjoying a glass of wine in the evening sunshine.

3. Forthcoming Meetings

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| August | No meeting | |
| September 26 th | Captain Cook's Voyages | Judith Goodacre |
| October 31 st | The City, Livery Companies, etc. | Richard Sermon |
| November 28 th | A.G.M. | |