

MINUTES OF THE 51st MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2012

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

1. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Rupert said that Dawn has had a book published about her father's work at Headington Hospital designing and producing aids for disabled servicemen.

Some time ago Mrs Cartwright-Hignett gave us pictures of a red Napoleonic uniform. We have now been told by Bonham's that it was a Victorian Deputy Lord Lieutenant's uniform, which would have been worn by Fairfax William Cartwright, born 14th May 1823, who held that office in Northamptonshire.

Next June we are reciprocating our visit to Adderbury by hosting their History Association to visit Aynho next June.

2. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Peter said that following a visit from Janene Beverland and her husband from New Zealand in May of last year regarding her ancestors the Mayo family, on 16th August he had had a visit from a Roger Mayo. Peter had asked him if he would like to be a guinea pig to try out his new tour of Aynho. He agreed, and it seemed to go well.

Exactly a month later on 16th September he had another visitor. A Donna Mann from Canada had asked if we knew anything about her great grandfather William Goodwin, who was born in Aynho in December 1842. The 1841 census showed William's father Joseph Goodwin, his wife and several children. In addition there was an Elizabeth Goodwin aged 68 living in the Almshouses in 1841, and still there in 1851, whom he presumed was Joseph's mother. Donna Mann confirmed this, and said that she was coming to England the following week. Peter met her and her husband, and took them both round the village. They came and looked at the censuses, and were interested particularly to see the Almshouses where Elizabeth had spent a good few happy years.

Yesterday Keith McClellan also hosted a history walk of Aynho. He and Peter had exchanged copies of their walks, and Peter is in the process of making up a full list of all the available information.

Finally he had received an aerial photo of Aynho taken in May 1950. It is a particularly clear one, so he gratefully accepted it.

3. Captain Cook's Voyages and the Aynho Connection

Judith Goodacre

Judith said that James Cook was born on 27 October 1728. At 17 he moved to Whitby where he began a life at sea on boats shipping coal from Newcastle to London.

William Peckover was born in 1748 in Aynho. Instead of following in his father's footsteps and working on the land, which was hard and poorly paid, he resolved to go to sea.

James Cook volunteered to join the Royal Navy. He rose to be appointed Master of the *Mercury*, and sailed for North America under Sir Charles Saunders, to fight in the siege of the French-controlled Quebec. He proved his navigational and charting skills in the St Lawrence River, which became a determining factor in the British success over the French. He also furthered his navigational skills by studying astronomy. After the end of the war he had established his reputation as a reliable and daring navigator.

Cook was chosen to lead an expedition commissioned by The Royal Society, ostensibly for the scientific purpose of observing the transit of Venus at Tahiti, but secretly and as instructed by King

George III, to explore the South Pacific to find the legendary “Terra Australis Incognita” or “unknown land” of the South.

He was offered the command of the *Endeavour*, a solidly built boat, flat-bottomed and so easy to beach and repair, capacious and able to carry many provisions, and Cook was promoted lieutenant.

At the age of 20 William joined the crew of *Endeavour* as an Able Seaman. He is listed on the ship’s crew of all three of Capt. Cook’s voyages, being promoted to gunner’s mate (*Endeavour* had 20 guns) and eventually to Warrant Officer. He survived Cook to serve on the *Bounty* as a gunner at the age of 39.

We can presume he was bright and had some education because of his later responsibilities as Warrant Officer, in charge of supplies on board.

The First Voyage on *Endeavour* was from 1768 – 1771. The ship’s flat-bottomed keel design allowed it to sail close to shore when navigating unknown waters, and be beached if needed. It was also equipped with its own long rowboat, a pinnace, a yawl and two skiffs.

On board was the wealthy Joseph Banks – a naturalist, botanist and patron of the natural sciences, a natural history expert Dr Daniel Solander and an artist, Sydney Parkinson.

The ship sailed south round Cape Horn to Tahiti, where in June of 1769 the transit of Venus was observed. Cook then explored the South Sea Islands heading south and east.

By 16th December they sighted the northern extremity of New Zealand and by the end of February 1770 had sailed around both north and south islands, charting both in detail.

They set sail for the east coast of New Holland (Australia), where Cook mapped the coastline and made landfall in April 1770 at Stingray Harbour, later renamed Botany Bay due to the fertile meadows, and the extensive number of plants discovered there by Banks.

The *Endeavour* sailed north along the Eastern coast until she had to be repaired after becoming holed on what we now know as the Great Barrier Reef.

In August they reached Batavia (now Jakarta), which was a key trading port of the Dutch East India Company. They arrived back in Plymouth in July 1771 after a voyage of 2 years and 9½ months.

Cook’s second voyage was on *Resolution* to chart and discover the Southern Continent of Antarctica.

It was accompanied by another ship, *HMS Adventure*. William Hodges was the official artist on this voyage. His scenes of Pacific islands and peoples are key images of this remarkable period of exploration. The ships went further south than anyone had sailed before, with the dangers of ice floes and the crew’s hardships in freezing conditions.

During this voyage, Cook (and therefore William Peckover) became the first navigator to sail round the world in both directions.

They were soon surrounded by islands of ice. The crew was issued with warm clothing, and they collected floating ice and brought it aboard for fresh water.

In thick fog the two ships lost sight of each other. Under agreed instructions, Captain Cook cruised for a further 3 days in the same area in the hope of re-joining the *Adventure* before he gave up, and spent a month sailing amongst icebergs and covering a great distance, but not having identified land. Then he steered for New Zealand, where the two ships were re-united. They continued to explore the South Pacific until they were again separated by a storm.

Cook continued to explore the Antarctic, heading south into the summer sea ice, with icebergs and fog until they could go no further because of the solid sea ice. On this occasion, Cook wrote: “I who had ambition not only to go farther than anyone had been before, but as far as it was possible for man to go, was not sorry in meeting with this interruption...”

The ship then eventually returned to England after a voyage of three years.

On his last voyage, Cook once again commanded *HMS Resolution*, while Captain Charles Clerke commanded *HMS Discovery*. The purpose of the voyage was an attempt to discover the famed Northwest Passage.

After passing between Australia and Tasmania, and between the two islands of New Zealand, Cook travelled north and became the first European to visit the Hawaiian Islands.

He then went northeast to explore the west coast of North America, and mapped the coast all the way to the Bering Strait, on the way identifying what came to be known as Cook Inlet in Alaska. In a single visit, Cook charted the majority of the North American northwest coastline on world maps for the first time, determined the extent of Alaska and closed the gaps in Russian (from the West) and Spanish (from the South) exploratory probes of the Northern limits of the Pacific.

The Bering Strait proved to be impassable, although he made several attempts to sail through it.

Cook returned to Hawaii in 1779. His arrival coincided with the Hawaiian harvest festival for the Polynesian god Lono. Supposedly the mast and sails of *Resolution* resembled certain artefacts of the harvest festival. Similarly, Cook’s clockwise route around the island of Hawaii was like their

processions that took place in a clockwise direction. It has been suggested these coincidences were why the natives treated Cook and his crew as an incarnation of Lono.

After a month's stay, Cook got under sail again to resume his exploration of the Northern Pacific, but shortly after leaving Hawaii Island, the foremast of the *Resolution* broke and the ships returned to Kealahou Bay for repairs. The season of Lono had ended and Cook's return became unwelcome. Tensions rose, and quarrels broke out. On 14 February 1779 some Hawaiians took one of Cook's small boats. Thefts were quite common in these islands, so Cook expected to take hostages until the boat was returned. He attempted to take hostage the Hawaiian king, but the Hawaiians prevented this, and Cook's men had to retreat to the beach. As Cook turned his back to help launch the boats, he was struck on the head and then stabbed to death.

William Peckover meanwhile outlived Cook and continued to sail.

In 1787, he was listed on the crew of the *Bounty* for the Caribbean under the command of Captain Bligh. In order to win a prize offered by the Royal Society of Arts, Bligh first sailed to Tahiti to obtain breadfruit trees, then set course for the Caribbean, where breadfruit was wanted for experiments to see whether it would be a successful food crop for slaves.

When he joined *The Bounty*, Bligh put William Peckover in charge of all trading activities in Tahiti, as he had visited Tahiti four times on the Cook voyages, spoke the language fluently, and had an excellent understanding of Tahitian customs and ways of thinking.

The *Bounty* never reached the Caribbean, as mutiny broke out on board soon after the ship left Tahiti. The mutiny took place on 28 April 1789. It was led by Fletcher Christian and supported by eighteen of the crew, most of whom were motivated by harsh treatment from their captain.

They had seized firearms during the night watch and surprised and bound Bligh in his cabin. They set him afloat in a small boat with eighteen of the twenty-two crew loyal to him. Peckover was kept below decks during the mutiny and he was only brought up when they were ready to put him into the launch with Bligh and the others.

Bligh and his crew navigated a 23-foot open launch on a 47-day voyage to Timor in the Dutch East Indies, equipped with a quadrant and pocket watch and without charts or compass. He recorded the distance as 3,618 nautical miles (some 4,000 miles).

It is thanks to Peckover that the ship's logbook survived. "On Tofua (on 3rd May after seeking supplies), when ordered by Bligh to single-handedly take the ship's log from a cave to the launch through a hostile crowd of natives armed with spears and slings, he did so without hesitation, boldly pushing his way through the warriors who, judging the book to be something of value, made repeated attempts to wrestle it from him. He succeeded in breaking through with the log..."

Bligh then returned to Britain and reported the mutiny to the Admiralty.

The British government dispatched *HMS Pandora* to capture the mutineers. Ten prisoners were eventually repatriated to England and tried in a naval court.

A full verbatim report of William Peckover's testimony to this court is on Admiralty files.

Peckover loved Tahiti and the South Seas. Even though he did not particularly care for Bligh, he applied for a position as gunner on the *Providence*, but Bligh turned him down. He continued to serve as gunner on a further seven ships, at least until 1801, but his ultimate fate is unknown.

So there you have the story of two men – Cook and Peckover – whose lives were intertwined with adventure in an era of discovery in the 18th century.

Peckover as a young Aynho man in his twenties witnessed the transit of Venus, the discovery and charting of New Zealand and the east coast of Australia. He survived the dangers of scurvy and dysentery, endured icebergs and freezing conditions at sea, and sailed to the southernmost point. In his thirties he enjoyed South Sea island life, avoided the perils of cannibalism, and in his 40's he survived the mutiny on the *Bounty* and a 47-day journey at sea in an open launch and continued to sail into later years.

He may well have been the most-travelled Aynho man ever. Was it his influence that we have our own Botany Bay just down the road from Aynho, near the Great Western Arms, according to a map dated 1837?

4. Forthcoming Meetings

October 31 st	The City, Livery Companies, etc.	Richard Sermon
November 28 th	A.G.M.	