

MINUTES OF THE 52nd MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 31st OCTOBER 2012

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

1. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Rupert said that the Aynho Community Weekend had gone off well. He said that for those interested in military history, he had gone over to Deddington for their AGM where soldiers of Oxfordshire were speakers about a museum, which is being rebuilt in Woodstock. It is due to be finished in March, but at present they have a bit of a funding crisis.

2. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Peter said that he had had yet another visit from one of his contacts visiting Aynho. This time it was couple from Perth in Scotland. The wife is a direct descendant of the Tebby family, who appear in all but the last census.

He took them on his village tour. For once he had been able to identify that at least one branch of the Tebby family had definitely lived in one of the tiny cottages on Charlton Road, although he didn't know the exact number. As he knew someone living in one of these cottages, he had arranged for the couple to have a look inside to see to how tiny they would have been originally to accommodate a family of eight.

Following Judith's talk last month, he had gone on-line, and managed to find not only an extract from the ship's log, after Bligh and his men had been cast adrift, and he copied the page in which Bligh mentions that the gunner, who was William Peckover, saved the log by forcing his way through the marauding natives with it, but also a full six-page testimony of Peckover's evidence to the court martial of the mutineers, some of whom were later captured and brought to trial. He had exhibited both of these amongst other things at the Community Weekend.

He mentioned that he would be proposing a minor amendment to our Constitution at the AGM, to extend the junior membership to anyone under 18, or undergoing full time education.

3. The City, Livery Companies, etc.

Richard Sermon

Rupert introduced Richard Sermon, an Aynho resident who is not only our first speaker who is an MBE, but also a Past Master of a Livery Company in the City of London.

He said that he had been a member of a Livery Company since he was 22, and he has been Master of two Companies, the first was the Wheelwrights' Company, a very old institution formed to supervise the construction of wooden wheels, and secondly Master of the Worshipful Company of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators, a far more modern Company.

He also had the privilege of serving as Sheriff of the City of London a couple of years ago. He produced his Coat of Arms, which is an absolute prerequisite of becoming a Sheriff, and his Warrant of Appointment.

Turning to the history of Livery Companies, Richard said that this was tied up with the way political power was used by the Monarch in the twelfth century, and how wealth was created by the City. The Kings or Queens always wanted money for wars, etc., and the City was often the main provider of this, so the City was given an amount of freedom in return. Edward III decided that the City should be a sort of Commune along Norman French lines, a self-governing enclave, with a Mayor.

The development of the Guilds originated pre-1066, with monasteries, where all training started. Guilds were formed in Saxon times, originally ecclesiastical and military, and later craft and merchants' guilds. These were not limited to just London, but to other cities, as well as other some in other countries.

As the City developed craftsmen with particular skills tended to group together geographically as market traders giving rise to street names like Milk Street, Bread Street, Ironmonger Lane and Poultry

which survive today. These formed into close communities, giving rise to the Worshipful Companies of this or that formed in later years as they lived together, worked together and worshiped together. As the Guilds developed they provided regulation and control, protection and welfare, and were a sort of forerunner of Friendly Societies, offering local self-help and a 'closed shop' environment with more than a touch of monopoly about it! They operated under principles of religion, justice, and morality, helping any members who met with accidents, became needy or infirm. Dowries and funeral expenses were often paid and women frequently took over the family businesses if their husbands died - and were admitted to the Guilds.

The Companies set and maintained standards, and could check and discipline anyone whose work did not measure up, or who sold inferior goods or at inflated prices. This included expelling members if the offence was serious, effectively depriving them of the ability to make a living in the City again. There were some disputes between Companies over the years. The most famous involved precedence. In 1483 there was a dispute between the Merchant Taylors and the Skinners as to who should be have 6th place in the river pageant, which was the Lord Mayor's Show. After fighting and bloodshed, and the execution of some of the protagonists it was decreed that they should alternate between 6th or 7th in each year except when either company has a Liveryman who serves as Lord Mayor when his mother company takes precedence. Hence the term 'sixes and sevens' used to describe confusion!

The Court of Aldermen (senior Councillors) representing 25 London Wards based on boundaries set in Saxon times is responsible for issuing ordinances for the practicing of crafts and the formation of Livery Companies. Royal Charters have been granted to some companies by Monarchs from the 12th century partly to secure allegiance but later as a way of raising money. A number of Companies were started this way. But eventually after they reasserted their rights this could only be done with the prior agreement of the Court of Aldermen. The first Royal Charter was issued in 1155 to the Weavers Company.

The Grant of Livery followed later in the 1300s. This defined distinctive clothing or a uniform and a badge of membership. Until 1385 every liveryman of any Company had the red same red and white livery, but each Company now has its own individual livery in colours of their choice. In 1132 Henry I had decreed that the freemen of the City could name the person they wanted as a Sheriff. This was later enshrined in Magna Carta and subsequent Charters. The period from 1315 to 1415 was a particularly important period for Livery Companies, as there was a surge of trade and commercial activity, and fifty new ones were set up.

There are 110 Companies today. The top twelve (known as the Great Twelve) are the senior (and generally the wealthier) ones and the others are the 'minor' or 'lesser' ones. In terms of scale the Mercers property investments if floated on the Stock Exchange, might well be the third biggest property company in the country. The Grocers were not originally people selling food and provisions but people who bought and sold goods in bulk by the gross and broke them down to smaller quantities for sale, or wholesalers as we would say today. Goldsmiths were one of the first companies to have a Hall and to verify the standard of their members work by way of 'their hallmarks'. Another word for this type of mark was a "touch", whether losing one's touch, refers to a person being dismissed for a misdemeanour is unclear.

After a period of decline in the 17th and 18th centuries the Livery was revived in Victorian times, and the practice of forming new Livery companies was re-established in the early 20th century with the Master Mariners' Company coming into being in 1926. The Court of Aldermen decided that they should encourage the professions and new crafts involved in the City in the late 1970's, causing the Chartered Surveyors' Company, the Chartered Accountants' Company and the Chartered Secretaries' and Administrators' Company to become incorporated, in just the same way and using the same ceremonies as in the 1300s. Because Richard was already a member of the Wheelwrights' Company, he was eligible to become one of the first members of the Chartered Secretaries' and Administrators' as well.

All the Livery Companies have the same basic principles: they exist to support the Lord Mayor and the civic life of the City, to support their craft or profession, and to support charities. A craftsman would start his training as an Apprentice. As he qualified he would become more proficient until finally upon approval of a formal example of his best work or his 'Master piece' he would be

eligible to become a Journeyman or Yeoman, working for someone with their own business. Subsequently he would be eligible to apply for admission as a Freeman of the City and then to become a Liveryman (full member) of his craft livery company and to set up or buy his own business. A Freeman had several benefits such as freedom from tolls, and taxes, and freedom to go to any market in the country. Management of the Livery companies involves a system of Courts, Masters, Wardens, Clerks and Beadles.

The number of men in any company was limited, to avoid there being too many for the market to bear. Courts (essentially Boards or Governing Councils) had the power to discipline members by expulsion if they misbehaved, such as selling underweight goods, hence the "Bakers' dozen", - (giving thirteen of everything) which ensured that a customer received the full amount.

Masters are generally elected by the Court to serve for a year. A Clerk is more like a chief executive or company secretary responsible for the administration of the company. A Beadle is a sort of constable to impose discipline and assist with ceremonial and processions.

The major companies were always involved in everything, particularly the Lord Mayor's Show. Several companies had halls, which were often originally mansions left by previous members, or some acquired by the company. 39 exist at present, several constructed or reconstructed post-war, they are also used as venues for companies who don't have their own. There is a gathering for all companies called 'Common Hall' held at Guildhall, bringing everyone together for elections and other civic events.

The Guildhall structure itself is largely unchanged from the 1400s, and includes statues to national heroes added over the centuries.

The Lord Mayor is the key figure in the City hierarchy. He is Head of the City Corporation, the elected local authority for the Square Mile, and is elected for one year only by the Court of Aldermen, consisting of 25 members, one from each ward of the City. To be Lord Mayor, you have to have previously been a Sheriff. There are two Sheriffs, one an Alderman, who may, if elected, become Lord Mayor at a later date, and the other a Livery Company member. The Sheriffs are responsible for the Old Bailey and have a small staff support staff including the Secondary and Under Sheriff who has executive responsibility for day to day operations, a secretary, two footmen and chauffeurs.

The Lord Mayor's staff includes the City Marshal, who is a military 'master of ceremonies', the Sword Bearer who carries the sword before him, and the Common Cryer who makes announcements.

The Court of Common Council consists of the 25 Aldermen (senior councillors constituting the Court of Aldermen - the Upper House of Common Council) and about 100 Common Councilmen. These are all elected but non-party political, independent representatives, which helps to ensure that quality people coming forward for posts as officials responsible for the everyday running of the City are also of a high standard.

The Lord Mayor is also Chief Magistrate of the City of London, Admiral of The Port of London, Chancellor of London University and Trustee of St. Paul's.

Regarding the history of Livery Companies, there was a surge of trading activity in the 1700s as the merchant venturers opened up newly found countries. However London grew, and the Livery Companies decided that they would not pursue interests outside the City. Some of the older crafts died, and there was competition from foreign countries. There was also extortion by monarchs seeking funds for wars. All this contributed to a bit of a decline.

In the late 1800s things improved. There was the Great Exhibition organised by Prince Albert and Government set up a Royal Commission to look into Livery Companies. In 1878 the City and Guilds Institute was formed, and awards were made. Traditional roles have continued and many companies retain great influence while many companies have seen their ancient crafts all but disappear but the 25 or so companies formed in the last 35 years have brought a new vitality to the Livery, which contributes over £40m a year to charity. The Companies remain committed to their craft or profession or in some cases to sectors which have grown out of them but all seek to promote charitable works and educational bursaries, assistance for disabled persons, and sport, etc. Much of the charity work is based upon education, so many schools are supported by the City of London and the Livery Companies, such as Christ's Hospital in Horsham.

In response to questions Richard said that the Lord Mayor could be of any religion. For example,

Edward III threw all the Jews out of the City, (leaving the area now known as Old Jewry) but then found that he needed money and there were no Jews to provide it, so he had to backtrack. He also said in response to questions that the Livery had strong ties with the military with many companies having affiliations to regiments, ships or RAF units.

We have several members locally, a Clockmaker, an Apothecary, and a Merchant Taylor. The great uncle of one of our residents was Lord Mayor in 1927.

In the year that he was Sheriff, Richard visited Turkey and also Angola, South Africa and Kenya in Africa where he attended 83 meetings in 16 days as part of the Lord Mayor's busy overseas visit programme promoting UK financial services.

When he first started as an Apprentice Richard had to produce detailed drawings of how to construct a wooden wheel.

Friars Well

Richard then said that he had been asked to say a few words about the history of Friars Well.

The house was built around 1760 by the Cartwrights. The initial planting in the park area was by Capability Brown. Before the war it was the estate manager's house and was subsequently let but after the death of the two Cartwrights, Richard and Edward, in 1954, the Mrs Cartwright and her daughter Elizabeth, now Mrs Cartwright-Hignett moved there, and made a number of alterations to 'gentrify' the house. These were done by Raymond Erith a well-known architect, who also designed The Pediment. He raised the roof, and put an attic level inside, installed a fine staircase, re-ordered the layout of some of the rooms

In 1960 Mrs Barbara Astor, who had parted company from her husband, bought the house and later married Viscount Ward, who was Air Minister in the Macmillan government.

Lady Ward as she became had other alterations made adding the back wing of the house incorporating the kitchen and adding additional bedrooms and bathrooms. She also altered the cottage at the front, a summerhouse was made out of a cart shed and a walled tennis court constructed. She also had a garage block and stables built. Richard was intrigued when a planning officer, calling about something else, commented on the tall garage block door, and suggested that it should be preserved as a fine old specimen of a barn, when in fact it was a garage as recent as 1963. It was just that Lady Ward had a rather tall horsebox! John Fowler of Colefax and Fowler designed most of the alterations and the layout of the gardens. Planting was undertaken by Lanning Roper against the background of earlier work by Repton and Capability Brown. Lady Ward died in 1982, and the house was bought by Hon. Nigel Turner a Director of Lazards. Richard and his wife moved there in 1987.

4. Forthcoming Meetings

November 28th A.G.M.