

MINUTES OF THE 55th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 27th FEBRUARY 2013

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

1. Chairman and Treasurer's Report Rupert Clark

Three old postcards, one of Aynhoe Park House, and two of trains in Aynho station have been added to the archive, also a copy of Andrew Mills' book of his Falklands War experiences.

Northants Records Office have a mobile exhibition of the Cartwright collection and we are planning to see it in Aynho soon.

2. Secretary's Report Peter Cole

A fragment of pottery found in the verge outside 11 Blacksmith Hill may be part of a beer jug. It bears part of the words "Cartwright Arms, Brewery, Aynho". It can't be older than the mid-1820s, since the pub was known only as The Red Lion until then. The most likely pub owner was William Bygrave, who owned the Cartwright Arms for more than 30 years in the second half of the 1800s. In each of the censuses from 1861 to 1891 he is described as also being a farmer, he may have grown his own barley, and almost certainly brewed his own ale.

3. "Banbury Past through Artists' eyes - painting, prints and drawings, sources for Banbury's local history" Simon Townsend, Curator, Banbury Museum

He said that Banbury Museum was lucky to have a collection of paintings and drawings of the town showing good details to illustrate history before the days of photography. Most of these are reproduced in a book, Banbury through Artists' Eyes by Simon Townsend and Jeremy Gibson.

The oldest known picture of Banbury was painted on 13th September 1724 by William Stukeley. It is a fantastic record of the town. Looking north down the Oxford Road, showing the old St Mary's Church and the medieval bridge over the river Cherwell. A couple of the original arches can still be seen from the towpath below the lock (or better still from the park on the other side of the stream) underneath the modern (Grimsbury) bridge. Open fields, and an old windmill are in the foreground. A sketch of about 1730, taken from the other side of the river, looking up towards the church, and it clearly shows the gallows, standing round about where Morrisons is today.

In 1817 George Shepherd painted the first proper coloured picture of Banbury, taken from the Bloxham Road. The old church had been demolished following the ravages of the Civil War, and the new building has replaced it, although the tower wouldn't be finished for another three years. There is a long line of poplar trees leading up to it. The original is in the Ashmolean Museum, but Banbury has a sepia version of it.

A drawing of St. John's Bar (South Bar) in 1778 by John Melchior illustrated the Bar gateway to southern Banbury. It was a tall, narrow almost free-standing archway on the road from Adderbury, near what is now the junction with Bloxham Road. St. Mary's Church is visible in the background. It probably dates back to the time of Alexander the Magnificent in the twelfth century. It made a statement to any visitor about the importance of Banbury as a market town. A painting from 1833, taken from almost the same place, shows the Bar has now been demolished and replaced by a needle like monument. The painting is supported by a contemporary account in T W Boss's reminiscences. He stated that there were a great many weavers living in South Bar, due to the growing popularity of the plush trade, which had its centre in Banbury. They held a daily half hour lunch-time "parliament" by the monument to discuss matters of the day. The chairman of the meeting,

a man named Clark, wore a top hat and had a wooden leg. The carter, John Dippers, the Bloxham carrier is also featured. On the right is the, the "Jolly Weavers" with landlord William Golby out front.

A picture from 1784 of St. Mary's Church before it was demolished includes a tall narrow free-standing rectangular tower close to but not touching the Church. It was suggested that this might be a bell tower, as the top of it is possibly wooden, to allow the peal to ring out.

John Cheney's painting in 1764, of Banbury's second Town Hall, standing in the west end of the market place. He later became our local publisher in 1767. In addition to the building, the picture includes a drawing of men in the stocks, and others in the long coats and tricorne hats of the day. The third Town Hall in 1801 was a first floor structure standing on archways all round, positioned near where the HSBC bank is now. It had a small tower, and in 1820, pursued by an angry crowd, the vicar climbed into it, but it couldn't bear his weight, and he fell through onto a joist. It was taken down brick by brick, and rebuilt by the canal, not far from Morrisons.

Next a picture of the Globe Room of the Reindeer Inn from 1859. The room was built in the early seventeenth century. The panelling was taken away and sold, but was later repurchased and relocated.

An unusual item was a map showing an outline of how Banbury Castle may have looked before it was pulled down in the 1680s after the Civil War. It was built by Alexander the Magnificent in the twelfth century, and was situated roughly where the multi-storey car park is for the Castle Quay development, with a moat, part of which was later used for the route of the canal. Stones from the castle were used to rebuild the town.

Another unique picture was of Banbury's bath house. Built in 1855, this was a circular structure, with a covered passageway to alcoves in the centre, surrounded by a moat in which people could swim. In its prime it had 500 bathers in a week. This seems to have been a one-off building, based on the Roman baths, and may well have been heated similarly.

Then there were pictures of the canal in the 1880s, with lots of wharves for the loading and unloading of goods, and another earlier one of 1778, when the canal had only just reached as far south as Banbury.

Other pictures were of an early train coming out of Banbury station, Banbury steeplechase in 1839, and the opening of the new Banbury Cross in 1859, with floral decorations and crowds of people, although in truth there was no such opening ceremony at all.

Finally there was a painting by a national artist, Rowlandson, depicting a view near Banbury. This is a general rural scene, but the artist was one who enjoyed caricatures, particularly about social conditions. After the Enclosure Acts there was a lot of rural poverty, and many lost their jobs. Here he makes a social comment by depicting a couple of well-dressed people on horseback, but in contrast in the corner others are walking off with all their possessions on their backs.

4. Forthcoming meetings

March 27th "Archives Matter - a National and Local perspective" Lord Boswell of Aynho

April 24th "Humphrey Repton - understand his impact on the Ashridge and Aynho estates landscapes"
Mick Thompson,
Ashridge Gardens Manager