

MINUTES OF THE 59th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 26th JUNE 2013

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

1. Chairman and Treasurer's Report **Rupert Clark**

We note with sadness the passing of Reverend Gill Barker, Aynho's first female Rector.

Last week we led 30 people from Adderbury History Association on our history walk. We congratulate Adderbury for assembling a unique collection of 60 locally built Quaker Clocks.

The annual village walk will be a History Walk on Sunday 29th September 2pm – 4pm.

2. Secretary's Report **Peter Cole**

The Cartwright Exhibition will revisit Aynho on Sunday 22nd September. It will be in Aynhoe Park and is expected to be open to the public. More details to follow. In addition the icehouse will be open. Regarding the icehouse, which was thought to have been built in 1818, he has been able to date it even earlier, as he had copied pages from an estate garden book, showing that beer and cheese was provided for the icehouse in February 1804, presumably when the work on it was completed, and a little later on is an entry: "A lanthorn for the icehouse."

3. "A Career in Ruins: The Life of an Archaeologist" **Mr David Jennings**

David has worked for Oxford Archaeology for many years on local, national and international projects.

The Time Team television series has been responsible for an explosion of interest in this subject, They always achieved results inside three days, but Mr Jennings wanted to talk about the reality. The majority of archaeological digs are in response to proposed construction of properties or infrastructure. The developer has to pay for archaeologists to write an evaluation of the site. This is based on records and excavation, similar to a Time Team exercise. Firstly comes a risk-based assessment, i.e. what is known about the site. A series of shallow scraps are made across the development area, between two and five percent of the land area is sampled in grid pattern. If something of interest is found, they will do a more specific investigation in some of the scraps. Depending on what is discovered, this is reviewed with the County Archaeologist (Planning Department). There may be a more extensive investigation. Archaeologists are therefore nearly always working to a very tight schedule, and to a fixed price. Time is money to a developer, he has bought the site, and often he has had to pay some sort of retainer to a construction company for workers to be available, so he wants any archaeological work to be done as soon as possible.

Archaeologists study change, be it building style, use, damage or artefacts, human, animal or plant remains. The discoveries are recorded by sketching, photographing and for the most part reburied in situ for later generations to re-explore. The rarest finds are donated or sold to museums or private collections. The ownership depends on who found the items, the value of them and the ownership of the site. Sale and or export of finds is tightly controlled.

In the UK one of the significant digs in recent years was at Terminal 5 at Heathrow. It was one of the most expensive jobs undertaken in the UK due to its size. 120 archaeologists were involved across a

number of sub specialisations. A rare “cursus” was uncovered, it is a long raised earthwork walkway pre bronze age, presumably it was used as a processional route.

On some occasions human remains are found. Some were found at Furness Abbey when a wall was being shored up, these were reburied.

At another site near Weymouth, when a relief road was being built in connection with the 2012 Olympic yachting events, 51 decapitated bodies were discovered, together with most of their skulls. Analysis of teeth from the skulls determined that they were Vikings from a captured raiding party.

At Fromelles in Northern France, in 2008, a dig revealed a previously unmarked mass grave from World War One. The remains of 250 soldiers, most of them Australians, were re-interred in a new Military Cemetery nearby. An extensive exercise was undertaken to identify the men using DNA analysis from ancestors of men missing in action from appropriate regiments. This is on-going but has successfully enabled some of the men to be reburied with CWG named headstones.

If HS2 is built there could be excavations of the route for the next 10 years.

Come rain, snow or shine, archaeologists will be investigating our forefathers and regularly rewriting our history.

4. Forthcoming meetings

July 31st History and Tour of Friars Well. Members only, or by prior arrangement. Mr and Mrs R Sermon

August No meeting.

Sept. 25th Leisure and Entertainment in Victorian and Edwardian Oxford. Ms Liz Woolley