

## **MINUTES OF THE 66<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT AYNHO VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> MARCH**

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

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

The Parish Council was approached by a TV company to investigate the tradition that Aynho residents had at one time paid part of their rent in apricots. With help from other members of the village Rupert has found no factual evidence to substantiate the legend. Peter confirmed that he too had tried to find any link in the Cartwright Archive with apricots but had failed to discover anything. Nonetheless it is beyond doubt that the Cartwrights introduced the trees but we don't know which generation.

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

Peter gave details of Eydon Historical Research Group's latest Report, entitled "Lest we Forget", telling the stories from Eydon in the Great War.

### **3. "Lord Nuffield and Morris Motors of Cowley Mr Bob Harris**

William Morris was a "one-off" , an extraordinary self-taught engineer and a generous philanthropist.

Born on 10th October 1877 he left school at age 15. He was good at mechanical things, and started off as an apprentice repairing bicycles. After a year he felt he was worth more than he was being paid, but his boss refused to give him a raise, so he left. With £4 capital provided from his family, he set up his own repair business.

He met a Revd. Dodgson, a very tall man for whom he made a bespoke bicycle. Due to its size and the quality of the workmanship it became a fantastic advert of what the young Morris could do; it now resides in the Morris Museum at Gaydon.

William further enhanced his profile by building and riding racing bikes. His racing prowess won him many trophies. He used his component buying trips to Coventry and Birmingham as training rides. It should not be forgotten that Oxford had no engineering tradition hence the necessity to "import" from Britain's manufacturing heartland.

The next development was motor bikes and a partnership with Joseph Cooper. In 1908 they moved into new premises in Longwall. Cooper was an excellent mechanic, but he wasn't much of a businessman. They dissolved the partnership, but Cooper worked for Morris the rest of his life. His legacy being the Mini Cooper.

Wealthy young men in Oxford universities became interested in buying motor cars, so William Morris decided he would like to move into this market. He became friendly with a very rich undergraduate, Lord Macclesfield, who was also a car enthusiast. Morris told him that one day he would like to build a motor car, but at that time he had no capital to do so. Lord Macclesfield offered him an unsecured loan of £4,000, a significant sum in 1911. Morris went to Gilletts Bank.

Arthur Gillett asked him how much money he had. When told about the loan, said "But how much money do you have?" Morris replied "One shilling". Gillett was so impressed with Morris, that he lent him another £4,000, again unsecured. This capital allowed Morris to sell 250 cars off plan to Marsden Stewart at the 1921 Motor show. He had the Longwall Garage but this was too small so leased the old Grammar school building in Cowley. All the components had to be outsourced, White and Poppe supplied the engine, Sankey the wheels and Lucas the lights. These remained key suppliers for many years. Thus he built his first car, a 1913 Morris Oxford. William was a great admirer of Henry Ford. He visited him in America to experience the use of semi-skilled labour on an assembly line. Henceforth he trained local men, most of whom had been agricultural labourers, to do one simple element of the car construction as each car was pushed along a rail in front of them. When the first car was finished Stewart came along to drive it to London but it only got as far as Headington, when the rear axle broke. It was quickly replaced but soon failed again. William realised that it had been made of cast iron, so he demanded that the supplier must produce one of phosphor-bronze immediately. Thus the problem was solved. This first little car was very successful.

During the First World War he lost most of his work force to the trenches in France, so he like was one of the first to include women in his factory. Car production was changed for making mine-sinkers and mines for the Admiralty. With his assembly line practices he could make these quicker than the other suppliers. As a result he was awarded an OBE for his work.

After the War, Morris had a rather lean time, as few could afford a car, and he made his only loss. Again Gillett helped him over this period, and it wasn't too long before circumstances changed. He expanded his premises again and began to increase car production dramatically, from 400 in 1919 to 55,000 in 1925, with the first Morris Minor. He was now making serious money. He survived the depression by cutting his prices to the bone, but he still paid a good wage to his workers. Eventually he introduced a profit-sharing scheme for them. In 1930 he again visited America, this time visiting Budd Brothers, who had invented a steel pressing procedure. These made the car bodies ready for another new invention spot welding construction.

By 1935 he was the biggest car manufacturer in Britain and one of the biggest in Europe. In 1947 he had ten thousand employees.

In the 1930s he became Baron Nuffield, and a few years later Viscount Nuffield. Nuffield was the village in which he then lived.

What did he do with all the money he was making? A number of his suppliers and some of his competitors were having hard times, so he gradually bought them up. These included Wolseley, where he introduced an up and coming young man, Leonard Lord, an able production engineer to turn Wolseley's fortunes around. The Morris 8 was another success, as were the Series E and the M.G. From then on Lord Nuffield himself always drove a Wolseley car, which is now at Gaydon. Although Lord Nuffield had married in 1903, he and his wife had no children, so there was no one to inherit his vast fortune.

A man who had a great influence on Morris' life was Sir William Osler. A Canadian, he was Regius Professor of medicine in Oxford, where he specialised in good teaching methods. He had an old car, and he would always ask young Willy Morris to come and fix it. They struck up a friendship, and this had great results, Morris started to give large sums of money for medical research. In 1923 Morris joined the Board of the Radcliffe Trust. He soon became President of the Hospital Board. Realising that Oxford had both the Hospital and famous university he decided that there should be a new teaching wing. This he funded and built on the old Observatory site.

In 1921 a convalescent home had been built in Headington. In charge of it was Professor G R Girdlestone, who specialised in treating crippled children. Morris called in on him and gave him a

cheque for £25,000 to endow it. This started a lifelong friendship.

Around this time Morris had moved to Nuffield village, which had a golf club, called Huntercombe. His wife wanted to join there, but was not accepted as it was designated men only. Morris promptly got out his cheque book and bought the club. He sacked the directors, and changed the rules. He became friends with many members there who were doctors. In 1936 he decided to set up four Chairs of Medicine. The University said that it only wanted three Chairs, one for Surgery, one for Medicine and one for Gynecology. Nuffield had suffered badly from the after effects of chloroform used when he had had to have teeth taken out. His response was to offer to endow a Chair of Anesthetics, much to the chagrin of the establishment. Nuffield spoke to the university leaders, pointing out that he had offered £1.4 million for three Chairs, but said that he would give £2 million if anesthetics was included. In the end money won the day, and he got his wish. Dr. Macintosh became the first Professor of Anesthetics. Nuffield's support transformed the study of Anesthetics from a cinderella subject to the frontline career we have today.

Nuffield also funded the mass production of penicillin. Although Fleming had discovered the drug, he didn't really know what to do with it. It was Florey and his Nuffield sponsored team in Oxford who made it the world wide success.

William Morris's legacy continues through the Nuffield Orthopedic Centre and the Nuffield Foundation. He was one of this country's greatest philanthropists.

#### **4. Forthcoming meetings and events**

Wednesday 30 <sup>th</sup> April	Child labour in nineteenth-century Oxfordshire	Liz Woolley
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> May	The EU- Past, Present & Future	Chris Hodges
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> June	Royal Mistresses	Mr Roger Powell

