

## **MINUTES OF THE 41st MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT AYNHO CHURCH ON WEDNESDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 2011**

Present: – Rupert Clark – Chairman  
                  Brian Reynolds – Treasurer  
                  Peter Cole – Secretary.

## 1. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Rupert said that regarding Nelson's carriage we have had an update. One of our older residents had given him a piece of metal, that her father had said came from the carriage. He produced it, indicating that it was the part that would have held the reins. However when he sent a photo to the Carriage restorers who have been advising, they replied that it could not have come from a Bryczka, as that was drawn by four horses, whereas this object was for two.

Rupert declared the History Walk a success. A good number of people attended and seemed to enjoy both the Walk and refreshments, etc. at the pavilion afterwards.

He announced that all subscriptions received that night were being donated to the Church.

## 2. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Peter said that on the day we should have had our July meeting he had been telephoned by two Howes brothers, one from Essex, and one visiting from America, who planned to visit Aynho, to research their family. He gave them a tour of the village, and they were particularly interested in houses in The Square and The Hill, where they believed their ancestors had lived. Peter gave them details from the censuses.

Earlier this month he had an email from a person from Bristol, who was enquiring about the Garrett family. He had seen a census entry showing that an Eliza Garrett had been born at Bush Wood in Aynho in 1824, and asked where this was. Peter was able to clarify for him that she had actually been born in Bush Wood, which is a tiny hamlet near Lapworth in Warwickshire, and had moved to Aynho subsequently. He was also given a full family history.

### 3. Finance Report

Brian said that the funds stood at £1,166. There were two invoices for approval, one for himself for a book "The Master at Aynho", the other for an engraving of the Grammar House together totalling £31.61, and an invoice from Peter for stationery expenses, including a new laser toner cartridge for his printer, which is mostly used for History Society minutes, amounting to £58.12. Both of these were approved.

Rupert mentioned that Kay has purchased some trees to form a Jubilee Wood in a corner of the Sports Field. It has been suggested that we could support this scheme by buying tree protectors to safeguard them in the early years. The cost would be around £70. This was agreed.

#### 4. St Michael's Church, Aynho

Anthea Bazin

Anthea said that it was not clear when the first church in Aynho was built. The fact that none is recorded in the Domesday Book means little, as very few are in Northamptonshire.

However, the boundaries of the Manor and the parish were the same, which is thought to mean that some early lord before the Norman Conquest had built a church and endowed a priest to serve his manor.

There was clearly a church by the middle of the 12th century, when Geoffrey de Mandeville granted its income and the right to appoint a priest to a new priory he had founded in Walden in Essex.

The medieval church had a short nave and a long chancel, a clerestory and the present tower. The tower is 14th century, with niches for statues of saints. You can still see a fragment of the

dragon over the door from a statue of St Michael. In the 16th century the tower had 4 bells, but none of those survive.

At the east end would have been a stone altar with altar cloth and candles. A rood screen stood between the nave and chancel with figures of the crucifixion. There would have been altars to Our Lady and to St Edmund and another figure of St Michael with candles burning in front of it.

The walls were probably painted, windows would have had stained glass and the church would have been full of colour. Records state that in the 16th century there were rich priest's vestments of red and white velvet and damask and a cope with St Michael embroidered on it. The chancel would have been half hidden by the screen and dimly lit and there the priest would say the mass in Latin, which most villagers would not have understood. So there was a sense of a special place full of mystery and awe.

The nave was used to discuss parish business. Occasionally people sought sanctuary in the church.

### The clergy

The first recorded priest, Ralph de Diceto, in the 12th century was a learned man who spent years studying in Paris. He was archdeacon of Middlesex and later Dean of St Paul's so he probably spent very little time in Aynho. In fact he obtained leave from the Prior of Walden to present a vicar to do his duties for him. He was called Turbert and he or probably his son (simple parish priests did sometimes marry) was still here 50 years later.

In 1485 the old hospital in Aynho was dissolved. It had been founded around the end of the 12th century by the first of the Claverings (lords of the manor) for two centuries as a hostel and infirmary for poor travellers. It stood roughly where College Farm is. It had two or three brothers, a chapel and land to farm. It also had a fishpond and mill, donated by the Claverings. It had the right to hold a fair at the feast of St James. Bishop Waynflete took the land for his newly founded college Magdalen, hence College Farm.

There is no recorded opposition to the Reformation - perhaps the villagers thought it politic to go with the flow.

### The Civil War

In 1643 the incumbent died and the Royalists wanted James Longman to take over. He was a Royalist sympathiser and they wanted one of 'their' men in the living. John Cartwright had fled to London. His mother was in Banbury prison and the Royalists tried to coerce her to get her son to support Longman. They took her back to Aynho and shut her in a freezing room to make her agree, which she did in the end.

James Longman only left the safety of Oxford to take some services and did not live in Aynho. Once the war was over a new vicar was appointed called Robert Wilde. He was a Puritan but not of the grim, long-faced type. He was against ritual, but pro the King and wrote a long poem on Charles II return journey to England 'Iter Boreale', which was very popular and is mentioned by Pepys.

Wilde was deprived of the benefice in 1662 along with 2,000 other Ministers appointed under the Commonwealth because they refused to subscribe to the 39 Articles of the Church of England with reference to sacraments etc. He continued to live in Aynho for a while and continued writing fashionable poetry.

Another eminent Rector was Joseph Wasse who arrived in 1711. He was a learned scholar and interested in everything and conducted experiments. He had a theory that people shrank  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch in half a day and only regained their height after a night's sleep, which he put down to compression of the cartilage between the vertebrae. He spent time measuring himself, Mr Cartwright, and various labourers to ascertain whether it was the same for people with active or sedentary lives. He reported that it was to the Royal Society. He also provided material on Aynho to John Bridges who was writing a history of Northamptonshire.

He preached rousing sermons and wrote 'I have broke several pulpit desks and put the Church Wardens to the charge of frequent repairs but cannot as yet avoid the importunity.'

## The new church

By the early 18th century the old church was in a bad state. It had already been noted in 1637 that many repairs were needed but the Civil War intervened. The chancel was in a slightly better state, since that was the parson's responsibility while the nave was the Parish's. The squire and the church wardens had a long dispute about who should repair a gutter between the nave and the chapel, so water poured in. Edward Wing was a carpenter living in Aynho, and he spent more and more time propping up the church.

In 1723 the decision was taken to pull down the old church and rebuild it. Wing had already drawn up plans for the new church.

His grandfather was a shepherd and his father a carpenter and he worked with him from an early age. He was 40 when he designed the church and it isn't clear whether he got help or not. His next and last church in Fenny Stratford was not a success - he was dismissed halfway through. The woodwork in this church has largely been changed by Victorian restoration so it is impossible to judge his work. He carried on living in Aynho doing carpentry. His first wife died a year after they were married. He married again and had 5 children but four of them predeceased him. A rather sad story, perhaps typical of the time where villagers for lack of training and opportunity did not achieve what their talents might have led them to.

The old church was demolished over the winter and in 1724 Francis Blencowe a contractor from Brackley set about the rebuilding, and it was completed within 2 years. The cost was £1,600, which was advanced by Thomas Cartwright. He recouped some of it by ploughing up some of the common land and letting it to village farmers for 4 years to raise funds.

At this point Graham Gibbs took over for the second half of the Talk.

## The Building and Fabric since 1723

Graham said that the church now is virtually one room, apart from a small vestry and chapel. A particular feature is a lack of pillars and no visible roof beams or arches.

Visitors to St Michael's are generally positive about the unusual architecture i.e. a Norman Tower conjoined to a classical Georgian period nave - others not so.

Looking above, you are sitting under the third ceiling since the building was first constructed. The 1723 original was a plaster ceiling with cornices which was replaced around 1857 by a dark wooden arched structure which included a canopy over the altar steps. The third ceiling you now see is a false ceiling which covers a series of large steel girders running the whole length of the roof. These were installed in the mid 1960s as the wooden ceiling had become very weak. The ceiling panels you see now have no architectural beauty but nonetheless provide good acoustics for music in the church.

Originally this meeting was planned for July, when it would have been possible to appreciate the different windows of the church, and everyone was invited to visit the church in daylight hours. When this building was constructed all the windows were clear glass.

The only remaining original clear windows can be seen at the western end of the building adjacent to the stairs up to the gallery. There seems to be a difference of opinion amongst all communities as to whether church windows should remain clear thereby drawing in the light and the beauty of nature. The main window (1857) behind the altar is the work of Thomas Willement who was an important figure in promoting the Gothic revival in stained glass. He was heraldic artist to George IV and his work can also be found in St George's Chapel Windsor. This is a particularly colourful window depicting the Last Supper, The Crucifixion and The Resurrection. The other windows of note are the two by Charles Kempe (1900) on the South side adjacent to the small Cartwright chapel entrance. Kempe was a major producer of stained glass windows in the UK and around the world, his largest commission being Winchester Cathedral. He identified his windows with a small sheaf of corn and if you look carefully you will find them.

Graham said that last year a condition report on all the windows was made, and they are faced with a long-term programme of repairs amounting to around £100K. The work started earlier this year with the window above the north door, which was considered to be in the most dangerous

condition. They will continue with the repair programme as money becomes available. Thanks go to all those who have arranged events to raise funds.

On entering the church you will have noticed the 18th century gallery supported by Tuscan columns. A special project in 2005 integrated a kitchen and toilet under the gallery, and with the removal of two rows of pews an area for fellowship and children's activities was also created. On the subject of pews we have boxed pews, which are found in some churches. Research has indicated that this feature was to minimise the draughts for those attending services – still, at times, a problem in mid winter.

Anthea and Graham, being churchwardens for St Michael's, thanked everyone for coming, and asked them to feel free to visit the church any time and enjoy this Grade 1 listed historic building that sits in the centre of Aynho's community.

Rupert thanked them both for their presentations.

At this stage members were invited to have refreshments provided at the back of the Church, and split into groups to visit the bell ringers platform in the tower, go round the Church to view the monuments, etc., and to watch some photos taken from the top of the tower by Peter Cole.

##### 5. Forthcoming Meetings

October 26th	A.G M (Members only)	
November 30th	Centenary of Kings Sutton School	June Smith
December	No Meeting	