

MINUTES OF THE 30th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD IN AYNHO VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 30th JUNE 2010

Present: – Brian Reynolds – Chairman & Acting Treasurer

Peter Cole – Secretary.

Altogether 30 members and guests attended.

1. Apologies

Apologies had been received from three people.

2. Correspondence Peter Cole

The Secretary said that yet again he had received an email, this time from New Zealand, enquiring about the Mayo family. A Janene Beverland said that her great grandfather was Richard Mayo, and his son Alfred emigrated to New Zealand in 1866.

Peter had looked through Nicholas Cooper's very informative book on Aynho, and had found no fewer than ten references to this family, and they had featured in five consecutive censuses. For the most part they were farmers or butchers.

He had passed on all this information. She replied asking if he could identify whereabouts they lived. From a map on the endpaper of the book it seems that they may have lived in part of what is now Borton's Farm. Janene has sent a picture of Richard Alfred Mayo, probably taken just before he left England, in full army uniform. She has asked if it could be traced what regiment it could have been.

Northamptonshire County Council has written asking if our Society would like to join their Adult Learning Portal to help those who have some form of mental anxiety or distress, and would like to join a group such as ours. People who just want some one to talk to, for instance someone who might be able to help if they have some life change or emergency. It would also be a way for them to meet new friends. They want to create a one-stop web portal, where people can find out what is going on where they are. It was agreed that we should participate in this.

3. Chairman's Report Brian Reynolds

Brian said that there had been an excellent Juniper Hill/Cottisford/Fringford visit that morning. This walk is being repeated at 2.15 pm on Sunday 11th July, ending up with tea and a question and answer session in the Apricot Room, Cartwright Hotel, at which the guest speaker will be Olivia Hallinan, who plays Laura in the T/v series.

The Church Fete was very well attended, with plenty of interest in our stall with our artefacts. As we were not selling anything to make a profit, Brian made a small donation of ten pounds to the Church funds.

Brian's interview with Peggy Harmer is now on DVD for anyone who is interested in it.

4. Finance Report

Brian Reynolds

The Acting Treasurer reported that funds currently stand at £1068.

The small child's shoe found in the pond in Ramblers Cottage has been identified as probably being made in London about 1660, and is of excellent quality and workmanship.

Brian has one invoice for £119.79, mostly due to research and conservation costs on the shoe, plus an old map of Aynho, and a horse brass of Aynho Wharf. This was approved.

5. Place Names, Landscape and Early Settlement in the Banbury Area Deborah Hayter

Brian introduced Deborah Hayter, who is on the Committee of Banbury Historical Society, and

lectures in Landscape and Local History at Oxford University's Department of Continuing Education.

She began by saying that place names are not trivial, as they often tell us about early settlements and history. The earliest studies of place names were done by linguists rather than historians.

People tend not to realise that the Anglo-Saxon period is just as long as that from the Black Death until now. In that time there was a great change in the development of the language. The English that was spoken before the Norman Conquest was what is now called Old English. The boundaries in Anglo-Saxon times were not clearly defined. This area wasn't Saxon until Alfred's reign in the ninth century; prior to that the people were called Anglians from Mercia. The first Anglo-Saxon settlers were illiterate pagans, so we don't have any written evidence of them at all. But we have traces of it in place names. The kings were leaders of groups of people, rather than of settlements.

Place names were given not by the inhabitants, but by their neighbours, in order to identify other settlements than their own. Of course names could change, and with some we will never be able to know their meaning. You have to try to find the very earliest references to them. Luckily the English Place Names Society has been doing research for many years, and has published volumes on both Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire.

Deborah produced two lists of names, and asked if anyone could distinguish between them. One member replied that one list (containing Banbury, Brackley and Bloxham to name but a few) related to major settlements (habitative), whereas the other list (including Claydon, Newbottle and Aynho) related to features of the landscape (topographical). For example there were many names for valleys, each meaning a specific type of valley, such as a dell or a coombe. One of Deborah's favourite books on this topic is "The Landscape of Place Names" by Margaret Gelling and Ann Cole.

Deborah posed the question: if at the time of the Norman Conquest you had been given say Aynho, how would you know where it was, and when you had arrived there? The answer lies in the "ho" of Aynho. A "ho" was derived from the word for a heel, and a "ho" always had a ridge rising to a point, with a concave slope behind, just like the heel of a person standing on one leg, with the other raised up and bent back behind.

A cliff was not necessarily a seaside cliff, but a hill with a slope of 45 degrees or more.

Deborah had done some research on the names of places around Banbury. This area is bounded by four Roman roads roughly in a diamond shape. There are many names relating to various sorts of woods. The word "leah" originally meaning a forest or wood is an important one leading to many places ending in "ley", such as Brackley, but over time it changed to represent a glade, and later still a meadow or pasture.

The first settlements were along river valleys, where land had already been cleared. There was a pattern of scattered villages already established during the late Iron Age, when agriculture was intensifying. Woodlands tended to exist along parish boundaries.

The word "lea" means fallow or untilled land. "Holts" and "wolds" were small woods. The "wold" name comes from the German "wald" meaning forest, which also gave us the Kentish weald. The Cotswolds are high open country now, but would originally have been mostly wooded. Wood pasture was a way of combining trees for timber and grazing at the same time. Eventually of course the trees, which were constantly cut back, got trampled by the animals, leaving just the grazing, and it is believed that this is what happened to the Cotswolds. Our modern "wood" derives from an Old English word "woodin", meaning large stretches of woodland, such as Sherwood Forest.

The rivers Nene, Ouse and Thames are very old, pre-Celtic. Names including “cester” from the Latin “castra” or camp, almost invariably relate to old walled towns or cities of Roman origin. A lot of scholarly time has been spent on the name “Wykham”. The “wyk” indicates a Romano/British trading centre, and the “ham” (pronounced “Harm”) around 600 AD suggests a farmstead with a central hall. “Hams” are some of the earliest settlement names, leading to Bloxham, Rousham, Southam, etc.

Early Saxon sites are very hard to find. Open field systems and villages were created around the 9th to the 11th centuries.

Some names derive from pagan connotations. An example is “Grim”, which was a nickname for Wodin, father of the gods. Another is “Weedon” from a wayside shrine.

“Tun” (pronounced “toon”) was the usual name for a farmstead or a small settlement in open country at the time of the Norman Conquest. It gives us our modern word town, but doesn’t mean that they were towns then. Mediaeval towns were called markets or boroughs, and places like Aynho and Charlton were “tuns”. After 731 it became used for a village or estate, and it is likely that a lot of places were renamed at this time. Deddington and Kirtlington may well have been renamed by about 900 AD.

There are five Hardwicks on the local map, “wick” being named after a dairy farm. For example the name Gatwick derives from a goat farm. A “barton” is a barley farm. Charlton was named after the Old English “ceorl” (pronounced “chelar”) meaning a freeman. The name “burgh” (including places such as Edinborough, Wellingborough and Banbury) indicates a fortified place, and later on a manor house. The name “Berryfield” isn’t where someone is buried, it is somewhere belonging to a manor house. There are several paired settlements, one on each side of a river, both of which were probably fortified at some time. There are a lot of “burghs” in strategically important areas, and several villages with “warden” in their names, which are watching posts. “Westbury” indicates a place defending against intruders from the west, although strangely there don’t appear to be many “Eastburys”.

In conclusion Anglo-Saxon invaders came along river valleys, and found land already cleared for farming. As they settled, increasing amounts of woodland were similarly cleared. Place names indicate that there were many more watery, marshy parts than there are now.

In response to questions Deborah said that the word “dene “ came from a valley. The names Deddington, Kirtlington and Watlington don’t bear any relationship to early settlements.

When asked if her pronunciation of “ton” as “toon” suggested a Geordie influence, Deborah said that it was not so. She pronounced it “toon” because that is how she thinks it should have sounded. It is all quite complicated. The reason why we can understand Chaucer quite well, and far more easily than literature from say northern England of that time, (and she quoted “Gawaine and the Green Knight” written by a Northumbrian, which to us would be well nigh impenetrable) is due to the fact that what we speak now is the descendant of the language Chaucer spoke. This is because he lived in the South East, where the capital city was, where parliament was, where universities were, and where the main centre of language was. Various separate dialects existed in other parts of England, but there was relatively little contact between such parts of the country, so they flourished. What is happening with dialects and accents now is that whereas a hundred years ago it would have been possible to pinpoint someone living in West Oxfordshire as opposed to someone from North Oxfordshire, nowadays these have been evened out, but the Brummie accent and the Geordie accent, etc. are becoming more entrenched as people have become quite proud of them.

Brian thanked Deborah for a very interesting presentation.

6. A O B
None.

7. Forthcoming Meetings

July 28th	Aynho Scenes	7.30 pm	Brian Reynolds
August	No meeting		
September 29th	Non-Conformity in 19C Oxfordshire		Martin Greenwood
October 27th	A G M		Members Only