

MINUTES OF THE 38th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD IN AYNHO VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 27th APRIL 2011

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

1. Apologies

There was one apology.

2. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Added to the Society Archive are a brass "Aynho" canal boat badge, an invoice from the Cartwright Arms dated 1893 and two paper cuttings from the Banbury Guardian circa 1970s. The first reports on the School pet show organised by two ten-year-old pupils, the second a picture of the Square and a report on the "Aynho apricot vines"! Also added to the Archive is Pippa Clark's (nee Morgan) 1st Aynho Brownies uniform, again from the early 1970s.

"The Pediment" is on the market and has received significant press coverage, these articles will be added to the Archive. Rupert will summarise the history of this unique property at a later meeting.

The Society will not be subsidising a picnic bench on the playing field at the request of Kay Anderson of ASRA, but was thanked for the enquiry.

3. Finance Report

Brian said that at 4th April the funds stood at £1,113.39, all but £31 of which is in the Bank. He has a receipt from Sybil for our donation to the Church Newsletter. So far a suitable water carafe has not been found for our speakers.

4. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Peter said he had had an email from a James Cartwright requesting information about a John C Cartwright believed to have been born in Aynho in 1602. His father had been Abraham Cartwright born here about 1575, and they were Quakers who soon emigrated to America. Peter was forced to say that there was no knowledge of this family, who were not related at all to our Cartwrights. He has also had an email from Janene Beverland from New Zealand, who had enquired about her ancestors, the Mayo family. She is hoping to come to England soon, and would like to see round our village.

Details of the painting have been given to the Parish Council to forward to their insurers.

5. Drove-Roads in the South Midlands

Bruce Smith

Bruce said that Northampton was the most important market in the Midlands. A lot of drove-roads went to Northampton. Droving was the oldest trade. In 80 AD pigs were being driven from Belgium to Rome. One and a half million sheep passed into Smithfield in 1800. 275 thousand cattle from Wales came into Kent and Essex, grazing there before they were sold. The rations of Nelson's sailors was four pounds of beef per week and two of pork, so you have a colossal amount of meat eaten. This was only really in the southeast. Edinburgh didn't have a single butcher's shop in 1860. Virtually no one in Scotland could afford to buy meat.

Up to 1580 only kings, nobles and armies wanted beasts for food. From then until 1850 Londoners became wealthy enough to regularly eat meat. By 1850 the coming of the railways knocked most droving on the head.

The best final profit for the drovers for a beast was one pound, but the average price before the railways came along worked out at 57 pence. Even with the railways it was often necessary to have somebody who knew the beasts to carry out the final part of the journey to the market, and to see that they were fed and rested before they were fit for sale.

Who were the drovers? Imagine a poor farmer's boy in Wales, living in poverty, suddenly sees an apparently wealthy man, well-dressed with a fine horse. The young lad would very likely want to follow this rich man and help him droving for a few years.

There was a local prejudice against drovers, but they did bring a lot of money, so by an Act of Elizabeth each drover had to be over 30, a householder, married, respectable and wear a badge and licence. Each boy had to have a dog. A corgi was originally the dog of choice for oxen. The collie came in later on in the eighteenth century, when the sheep trade took off. The drover had to have a horse or pony, so he could go ahead to find lodgings for the night, and to work out the route, as of course there were no maps in those days. There was roughly one person for every 60 beasts. They bought for £4 and sold for £8, but they had a lot of expenses on the long journey, which is why they only got a pound or less in the end. No money changed hands at the beginning of a drove. The whole thing worked on trust. A price would be agreed, and it would just be "a spit and a slap". The drover could be two months away, and the farmer wouldn't get his money until he returned. However drovers were not allowed to go bankrupt. A David Jones set up a drovers' bank in 1790, which only dealt with the drovers, so it was guaranteed to pay full value. Although it was a Welsh bank, it had branches in London and other important towns to enable transactions to be made easily. This meant that the drovers did not have to carry a lot of cash with them, so they were not in danger of being robbed. It was called the Black Ox Bank, and became subsumed into the Black Horse Bank in 1909.

Cows had to be shod for the journey, and as they were cloven-hoofed they needed two shoes on each foot. These were quite small and thin, as they would only be needed for one journey, which is why very few survive. A smith would work all through the winter making as many as eighty thousand of these shoes, called "ciws" in Wales. The main times for droving were February to May and October to November.

How to recognise drove-roads. Drove-inns are usually on a crossroads. Some of them have an unusual triangular-shaped field opposite. These are called gore fields, and they are a stance, where the cattle lived for the night. They are triangular as this is the best shape. If you are herding cattle in, they cannot easily get round behind you. So far as place names are concerned one of the most popular was "Welsh" lane or road, as most cattle came from Wales. Others were "Drift", as the cattle were drifted down at only 2 miles an hour, others were "Stock", "Ox", "London" or "Smithfield". Long narrow fields alongside roads were often used by drovers as stances for the night. Where possible they kept mainly to the high ground to avoid mud. Shoes would often come off in sticky mud, and the drovers were not experienced enough to replace them. A good drove-road would have a hedge each side, and grass strips between the hedge and the road. Pine trees were used as markers for useful places like pubs. Villages and especially pubs usually welcomed drovers, because they were a source of trade.

A drove-road near Aynho is the one that starts just to the east of Cut Throat Corner and runs northeast to near the Hinton-in-the-Hedges and Croughton roads junction. There is a stance at the Hinton end.

The drovers kept account books detailing their expenses. Apart from board and lodging and food for the animals, they had to pay tolls on all turnpike roads. It was a halfpenny for every beast at each tollgate, which soon mounted up. There was also the cost of having all the cattle shod. The most important route coming from north Wales crossed the Menai Straits, and came down through Wrexham, east of Birmingham, Kenilworth, Southam, Culworth, Buckingham and Aylesbury to London.

Quite a few drove-roads had gallows on them, not because of crimes committed by the drovers, but because people were stealing from them. However magistrates were more likely to believe the word of a drover than anyone else. Before the arrival of the police force there was normally no law against carrying firearms. But in the 1740s the threat from Bonnie Prince Charlie was so great that Parliament passed the "Disarming Acts". Under these laws no one was allowed to carry a gun. However drovers were exempt from these Acts, as their trade was so important.

Locally there is evidence of drove-roads at Marston Doles, Priors Hardwick, near the Rollright Stones, Hook Norton, Adderbury and Croughton. There is or was an "Ox House" on the track up north from the lay-bye near the M 40 on the Banbury Road from Aynho.

Bruce Smith said he had heard a tale of an Aynho man, living on the main road through the village at a point between two bends. This was the only place where for a very short time it was not visible from the men at either end of the drove. The person there would wait for the right moment, fling his door open, grab a sheep, pull it inside, and shut his door before the man at the end came in sight. It was not until a count at the end of the day that a missing sheep was realised, and by then it was too late to think how it could have gone astray.

Croughton was quite important because there is a stream at Blenheim, which was used for watering beasts.

As mentioned at the beginning, Northampton was a busy town so far as the meat market was concerned. This is because in the twelve and thirteen hundreds, when there was a problem with Scotland, King Edward established Northampton as a sort of military quartermaster base for the army. It was right in the centre of England and the market there was far bigger than any of the larger nearby towns.

Banbury didn't become a great market until the railways, because it was low on the ground and level and therefore suitable for railway transport.

1901 was the date of the last drove all the way from Wales to England.

Rupert thanked Bruce for a most interesting talk.

6. A O B

Jean Darby spoke about a Posse Comitatus. This was part of a Defence of the Realm Act, which was introduced at a time when there was a threat of invasion by Napoleon. Every parish constable had to make a list of every able-bodied male between 16 and 60, so that they could be called up if invasion occurred. Unfortunately the Records Office doesn't have a list for Aynho, but they do have the Military List for 1777 and 1781. She has sent for a copy of these, and will say more when it arrives.

7. Forthcoming Meetings

May 25th	History of the Grammar House	Sally Strutt
June 29th	Ridge and Furrow	Barry Smith
July 27th	Aynho Church	Anthea Bazin