

## **MINUTES OF THE 39th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD IN AYNHO VILLAGE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 25th MAY 2011**

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

### 1. Apologies

There were three apologies.

### 2. Chairman's Report

Rupert Clark

Rupert said that there was an invoice for a History Society carafe and tumbler, and also for two plants, totalling £29.49. These plants are of the Royal Wedding rose. They are called Catherine, not just after Catherine Middleton, but also St Catherine of Sienna, whose Saint's Day is 29th April, the Wedding Day. There is a slight link with Aynho here, as Sir Fairfax Leighton Cartwright married Maria Chigi Zondari of Sienna, and the Cartwright Arms pub sign on the wall bears in part the arms of the Chigi family. For many years Maria and her husband lived at the Grammar House. Payment of the invoice was agreed, and the roses were presented to Fiona Hodges.

### 3. Finance Report

Brian said that the funds stood at £1,160.

### 4. Secretary's Report

Peter Cole

Peter said that he had taken Janene Beverland and her husband Rob from New Zealand, who had enquired about her ancestors, the Mayo family, round the village. In particular they had looked at the garden of Bortons Farm, where a family member had lived, but the house he lived in no longer exists. They took a photo of where it had been. Having learned that another member of the family had lived elsewhere, they visited that address as well. They also went to the Church, where Janene had wandered into the churchyard and almost immediately spotted her great, great grandfathers tombstone. The writing on it was just about legible, and this really made her day!

At an Admin Committee meeting it was noted that a number of former members had not renewed their membership this year. It was agreed that Peter would put them on a special email list, and point out that unless they renewed they would get no further minutes.

He had received an email from someone who had an old photograph of the Aynho fire team. Peter had replied that it was probably the one that was shown two month ago. This turned out to be correct, but this photo had the names of every team member written on it by Ted Humphris, the author of the "Garden Glory" and "Apricot Village" books.

### 5. History of The Grammar House

Sally Strutt

Sally said that she would talk first a little about the history of the Grammar House, and then we would move over to the House. There we would split into two groups, one led by Sally and the other by Fiona for a tour of the House.

In 1654 Mary Cartwright, widow of Richard, made a codicil in her will leaving £700 to pay for the building of a school in Aynho, and to cover the salary of a school master and apprenticeships for poor boys. Her son John eventually in 1663 began to arrange building work. The actual contracts are retained in the Cartwright Archive, in a book entitled "Agreements with Workmen". In 1666 the schoolhouse was completed and the schoolmaster's house was added on. Thomas Freeman was the carpenter and main contractor, and Martin and John Kenning of Banbury provided the stone. Other contractors were Thomas Wyatt of Adderbury, a Jo Whittaker of Kings Sutton who was the glazier, and Thomas Turbit was the plasterer. The School opened in 1671. There was a motto on

the sundial on the front of the House, which read, "Yet a little while is the sun with you, walk while you have the light."

The school was built for the sons of local gentleman farmers. They were taught classical Latin and Greek. Another document at the County Records Office is headed "Rules of Aynho Grammar School". These 30 rules are written in John Cartwright's hand, and set out employment details for a schoolmaster, what sort of boys the master should take on (e.g. over the age of seven and able to read and write) and what they were expected to do or not do (e.g. they should not go into any orchard or garden in Aynho and steal fruit, etc.).

The school continued to be a Grammar School for the next two hundred years. Notable scholars were Philip Thicknesse, an 18th century writer, William Tuckwell, a leading surgeon, and Philip Webb, who was an architect who designed William Morris's Red House. Richard Leonard was one of the schoolmasters, who was renowned for his scholarship, and was also addicted to green tea. John Burbage was another 18th century teacher, whose son Edward became the Aynho apothecary.

In 1823 John Buckler made an engraving of the school, looking remarkably as it does today. By 1889 pupil numbers had dwindled to about four or five, so the school was closed. In 1894 it was sold to Thomas Cartwright, son of William Cornwallis Cartwright, but he died two years later, and his estate went to his brother Sir Fairfax Cartwright, who modernised it as a Dower House, renamed the Grammar House, and lived there with his wife Maria Chigi. In 1905 a modern two-storey wing was added at the rear. It remained in the Cartwright family until 1969, when Elizabeth Watt of The Pediment acquired the house. She put a covenant on the garden, which stipulated that building would not be permitted in the garden, which remains to this day. She sold the House on to the Jarmans, and it then passed to the Fittons, the Whittings and in 2003 to Chris and Fiona Hodges.

Everyone then moved over to the Grammar House, and two parties were led round. On entering through the heavy wooden door, immediately on the right is a large room, now split into two rooms, which was originally the main room of the school. This is the oldest part of the House, built of Adderbury and Milton stone, with an imposing Hornton stone chimneypiece. It had four south-facing window bays, in some of which you can still see initials and graffiti written by boys below the windows. On the large table Sally had placed copies of two old maps, one of Aynho in 1696 by James Fish, another a nineteenth century map, a couple of pages of the "Agreements with Workmen", and the "Rules of Aynho Grammar School" for inspection.

From there we passed into the study, which was originally part of the schoolroom.

Next came the more modern (Victorian) part of the House, the kitchen, where there would have been service rooms and pantries. To the left is a place where the bells would have hung to summon the servants. To the right (north side) is a "cold room". Next a utility room is passed, which may have been a site for the pump. There is a cupboard under the stairs with original stone flags.

After the sitting room, with beams that are not symmetrical showing that it has been altered over the years (it may once have been a kitchen), we descended via a steep little staircase with low headroom to the cellars. There are three of these, probably dug in 1666. The school may have been built on the site of old yeomen's cottages.

One of the Society members informed us that a servant to Fairfax Cartwright's wife Maria used to live in the cellar, using the large fireplace and the adapted windows.

The stairs were made of Aynho stone by Thomas Allibone and Thomas Kirby in 1666. There are scars of storage bins in the floor of the third cellar room, and beautifully laid flagstones in the other two.

Back up to the main stairs. These were once in the front room by the chimney, but were later moved to the present position. A half landing was once a lavatory. On the first floor were originally the dormitories for the boys, above the schoolroom, and the master's dwelling to the west. It is clear from the beams that some rooms had been partitioned.

We then went up more stairs to the second floor, above the schoolroom. This had bedrooms in the attic, and a window overlooking the roof valley between two parts of the House. There is a clear

builder's mark in one wall "TT 1691" made by Thomas Turbit the plasterer. Due to a weak floor it was not possible to crawl through roof timbers to the furthest attic, now a repository for operatic costumes, but the entrance could just be viewed from a doorway. There are several bedrooms in the attic area.

We then went back down to the first floor, to a Victorian wing on the north side. This is the Cartwright Wing created mainly in the early 1900s by Sir Fairfax, who lived there for many years. There is a gentleman's study, with much reclaimed wooden panelling from about 1848. The bedroom suite consisted of bathroom, dressing room and bedroom. Fairfax's wife, Maria Chigi, being Italian, wanted a balcony built outside her bedroom. This room has windows on three sides, with good views of the gardens.

Having been round the House, everyone then went into the garden, from where one can get a good view of the rear (north side) of the building. Many people went right round the huge garden, The walls were originally made of eighteenth century Cotswold stone, later heightened with brick and topped with Victorian slate. There are various sheds and outhouses, a greenhouse and a garage, which had originally been stables, which was in danger of falling down and has recently been rebuilt. There are many interesting plants in and amongst the paths, trellises and a long winding round pergola that make the eastern side of the garden so fascinating.

Back in the Village Hall Fiona and Sally had provided wine and nibbles to round off a lovely and informative evening.

Rupert thanked both Fiona and Sally for an enlightening tour.

#### 6. Forthcoming Meetings

June 29th	Ridge and Furrow	Barry Smith
July 27th	Aynho Church	Anthea Bazin
Sept 28th	Aynho Military Connections	Rupert Clark