

## **MINUTES OF THE 76th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2015**

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

### **1. Chairman's Report**

The Edward Savings medals have come back into the village, purchased by the Savings family.

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

The Cartwright Archive Trust was established to save the Archive from sale overseas. The documents are held by Northamptonshire County Records Office. An Archivist was engaged to catalogue it all, and the Trust also paid for an excellent set of exhibition screens depicting the life of the Cartwrights over more than 300 years. The Trust has sought new Trustees who are tasked with how to maximise the use of the materials. Rupert, Keith McClellan and Peter will become Trustees accordingly.

Peter has become Aynhoe Park's new tour guide, following in Jimmy Guthrie's footsteps.

### **3. Votes for Women – The Suffrage Movement"**

By Muriel Pilkington

In the late C18th British people had begun to benefit from the World's most advanced technologies i.e. railways, our Empire, our industry and exports, but they lagged behind many countries in terms of representation in Parliament.

From the start of the French Revolution women have been seeking equality with men rather than the right to vote. In Britain, Universal Suffrage was to follow as an aim from the 1890s. Mary Wollstonecraft observed this and wrote a book in 1792, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman", which became a best seller in England. From her ideas came the first thoughts of women getting the vote

The Reform Act 1832 allowed a few more men to vote, but most men still could not and barely a handful of women had the right. Only 214,000 property-owning men were allowed to vote by a show of hands. In 1867 the vote was extended to all the male householders in towns; this equated to half the men in England. It was this inequality which encouraged the starting of suffrage movement for both sexes. In 1885 the vote was extended to all men under 60, about five million.

It wasn't until 1918 that virtually all men and women got the vote under the Representation of the People Act.

A few women in a very limited number of cases were allowed to vote, but women generally had other concerns. They could not become a mayor, nor hold public office. They had no property rights. They could not get divorced, without an Act of Parliament. They could not go to universities, nor could they enter professions, and anything they earned belonged to their husbands.

Many men such as John Stuart Mill were strong advocates of women's rights.

The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1873 allowed married women to divorce their husbands, and two Property Acts a few years later gave women rights to their property and possessions. The Ballot Act of 1872 was also very important. Although it did nothing to give women the vote, it meant that when they did get it, all voting was by secret ballot, rather than a show of hands, which had allowed voters to be pressured against their will.

Increasingly there were further improvements to the rights of both men and women as years went by. The Corrupt Practices Act of 1883 set a limit on how much anyone could spend on elections. The 1880s saw a lot of amalgamations of small local societies into much larger groups. In 1897 Millicent Fawcett set up the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). These were Suffragists rather than Suffragettes. The latter group was formed in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters. They were the WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union). In 1907 the Suffragists held a Mud March, so called due to the appalling weather they walked through, in support for the Suffrage movement. Despite the conditions this was one of the first mass marches, and it drew crowds of spectators, so it was deemed a success. The WSPU were a much more disruptive group. Their motto was "Deeds not Words". Mrs Pankhurst said "It is our duty to break the law, in order to call attention to why we do it". They began to adopt more radical policies, breaking windows, setting fire to pillar box contents and chaining themselves to railings outside Downing Street and Buckingham Palace.

The use of violence increased in 1910 and 1911. Marion Dunlop went on hunger strike in prison. Emily Davidson died having stepped out in front of the King's horse in the Epsom Derby. These events gained an enormous amount of publicity for the cause. However, as late as 1914 there were groups who campaigned against the Suffrage Movement, containing both men and women.

Just when it seemed that women would get the vote in 1914, the Great War changed everything. So many men were going off to war that women were forced to take over their roles. So the suffragette movement focused their attention on the war effort.

In 1918 men were returning, but still not all men or women could get the vote. The 1918 Representation of the People Act enfranchised women over 30 who were married to a rate-payer. Finally in 1928 the Equal Franchise Act enfranchised all women in the UK.

It took another 50 years for some European countries to follow suit.

#### **4. Forthcoming meetings**

Wednesday 29th April            "Women at War" (rescheduled from February)  
By Bob Harris

Wednesday 13th May            "Aynho's Apricots – the legend --and the reality"  
Presented in conjunction with Aynho Gardening Club

*(Please note the change from usual meeting date, please bring your wallets, as Apricot wares will be on offer to eat and drink)*