

**MINUTES OF THE 79th MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY IN CONJUNCTION WITH
ADDERBURY AND DEDDINGTON HISTORY SOCIETIES HELD AT THE WINDMILL CENTRE,
DEDDINGTON ON WEDNESDAY 24TH JUNE 2015**

Presented by Dick Ferguson with Rupert Clark

Waterloo and the battle for Chateau Hougoumont

Almost 200 years ago to the day, news arrived at Aynhoe Park of Wellington's victory over the colossus who was Napoleon. Soon after, a letter from William Cartwright arrived from Belgium recalling his survival of the battle. No doubt, much to the pride and relief of the family and Aynho village.

The lecture presented to an audience in excess of 130 followed a week of worldwide media coverage of the bi-centenary of one of the most well known battles in history. Worldwide, there are references to Waterloo and Wellington through the naming of settlements large and small and many buildings and institutions. The European order changed as a consequence. Rather than try and cover this vast topic the lecture focused on the defence of the chateau on Wellington's right flank. The struggle here was illustrative of the actions all over the relatively small battlefield. I do not propose to report the meat of the lecture, as there are well over 2,000 books on the battle.

Alongside the key lecture theme, local combatants were introduced and their stories recalled.

Private Matthew Parish aka Matthew Vincent of Clifton fought with the Coldstream Guards. He was stationed on Wellington's right wing. For much of the day the Guards had been ordered to lie down in the cornfield so to present less of a target for Napoleon's artillery. Sometime after 7pm they stood up and fired volley after volley at short range into the finest infantry of the era, the French Imperial Guard. Matthew survived a day of extra ordinary bloodshed to reach the age of 87 years. The defenders of Chateau Hougoumont would have witnessed these events.

Private Robert Bull from Grimsbury was part of the force defending Wellington's retreat route to Antwerp. He was stationed at Hal with the 2nd Battalion 59th Foot so had no action.

Privates Robert Bloxham and David Howe both fought with our local regiment, the 52nd foot, the Ox and Bucks. They spent much of their day in a similar situation as Matthew. But when they stood up and volleyed they fought the flank of the same advancing French column. The 52nd then advanced down the famed slope, heading to the heart of the French Army. Their action not only halted the French advance in its tracks by causing damage and confusion it also effectively cut off the Imperial Guard's escape route. Both men survived.

Apart from Robert, all the local men who fought at Waterloo were involved in the same final element of the battle defeating Napoleon's last throw of the dice, the advance of the Imperial Guard on Wellington's right centre. William Cartwright and the 10th Hussars had spent most of their day on Wellington's extreme left flank. They were to stop his flank being rolled up by a French swinging advance from their right. He would have been one of the first to see the advancing Prussians march in from the east. Just as the Prussians came into view, Wellington moved the 10th to his right centre as reinforcements. William and his men had had a day of watching and waiting and being Hussars were desperate to get involved. Involved they were as they charged into the defensive square the Imperial Guard had formed as their advance stalled. This was a foolhardy attack but with overwhelming support of the Coldstreamers and 52nd the Imperial Guard were destroyed almost to a man. William was lucky to survive, as he would have led his troopers from the front. His Colonel (regimental leader) and his close friend Lieutenant George Gunning (of Hornton, Northampton) were both killed. The Gunning and Cartwright families became closely linked, through marriage and both families represented Northamptonshire constituencies in Parliament. William's letter home recalls the loss of his friend, the filthy weather, and his action in the

previous days covering the retreat from the battle at Quatre Bras. As well, he reports the theft of his luggage (blamed on the Belgians) and after the battle he was pleased to tell his Mother, he had changed his shirt for the first time in the best part of a week.

William had served as an ensign with the Gloucesters in the Peninsula from the age of 16. During Napoleon's first exile, he transferred to the Hussars who were based at Romford. Due to the Corn Riots of 1815, William and his men took station outside the London stock Exchange. Although they did not need to use their swords on the British public, that did happen in Liverpool. Post Waterloo, he rose to the rank of General. His letters home survive and recall the hardships but also the close links he had within the officer corp. A recognition of the Cartwright's standing and connections.

Thanks are due to all who supported the event. The profits have benefited the military family support charity SSAFA by £600. Also to those who brought period weaponry, constructed a diorama of the attack on Chateau Hougoumont, Coles of Bicester for offering Waterloo books for sale and those who ran the Waterloo themed cheese and beverage bar. Attendees came from a dozen different local history societies.

.....

Wednesday 29th July those who wish to see the Aynhoe Park ice house should meet at the Village Hall at 7.05 pm for a viewing with Peter Cole to be followed by at 7.30 pm by "The History of the Oxford Canal" by Mark Davies

As per usual, there is no August meeting