

**MINUTES OF THE 93rd MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2017**

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Present: - Rupert Clark – Chairman  
Peter Cole – Secretary

**1) Chairman's Report**

Rupert reported the sad death of two Aynho residents, Peter Latham, who had given a talk at our 13th meeting about our Church clock and carillon, both of which he had maintained for many years, and centenarian Margaret Taylor, who had been a member.

**2) Brackley - from the Iron Age to the Wars of the Roses, presented by Rosemary Leeper.  
We all know modern Brackley but what of its past?**

A teacher of history she moved to Brackley nine years ago. Her talk is based largely on a book "History of Brackley" by John Clarke.

Little is known of pre Roman Brackley. Roman forces occupied Rainsborough Camp less than 10 miles away, but there was no permanent settlement. Roman road building has left us Watling Street, running south to north was close to Brackley, and another road running east to west, from the Birmingham direction towards Buckingham. Excavations during the building of an industrial estate on the south side of Buckingham Road revealed clear evidence of a Roman settlement. This has been referenced in the street names, such as Roman Way and Octavian Way. It is now believed that originally there were two separate parts of Brackley, one just to the west of the northern road, and the other on Buckingham Road.

The Saxons settled, first in Halse, presumably chosen for its easily defensible high ground. Current thinking is that Brackley is named after a Saxon named Bracca circa the 7th century. Legend has it that in 650 the pregnant wife of Penda King of Mercia was on her way to visit her son Peada in Kings Sutton when she suddenly gave birth to St. Rumbold. The child immediately began to speak, declaring that he was a Christian, and giving a sermon, in which he predicted his death in three days' time. He asked to be baptised and then buried in Buckingham. St Rumbold's Well is found in Pebble Lane, Brackley.

From about 900 the area was under the control of Danes. The Normans arrived and a wooden motte and bailey castle was built in the 1080s in the south west of the town. Built to defend the ford and the new Norman road we know as the A43, it was destroyed by King Henry III in 1173. Today only the mound on which the castle was built still remains to the north of Tesco's. The importance of Brackley is such that in the Domesday Book Brackley is shown as part of the Manor of Halse.

Robert de Beaumont, 2nd Earl of Leicester, inherited Brackley and his son Robert du Bossu built a Hospital of St James and St. John, on the opposite side of the road to the castle. Like our own Hospital in Aynho of a similar date, this provided care for travellers. Later he built a Chapel to St James, which still exists to this day. The Victorians extended the Chapel considerably, and it now forms part of Magdalen College School. The chapel holds a number of WW1 temporary wooden crosses belonging to ex pupils.

The parish Church of St. Peter is on the eastern side of the town. The present building replaced a Saxon Church on the same spot. In the 13th century a square tower was added. The north door is

blocked up. There are two statues in alcoves, one of St. Peter and the other of St. Hugh. Hugh had been born in France. He was a monk who had been the right-hand man of King Henry II. The King made him Bishop of Brackley. Apparently around 1200 a thief had sought sanctuary in the Church, but he was lured out whereupon the Reeve and his men had him hanged. This was contrary to all the teachings of the Church, so the extremely pious Hugh decided to excommunicate everyone involved, but would commute this if they did penance for their sins. This they all did except for the Reeve. He eventually had to suffer a much more severe penalty. In 1539 a renowned antiquarian John Leland visited Brackley. He was told that a priest of St Peter's Church had committed a serious theft and had subsequently been buried alive. He was shown a tombstone with a stone effigy of a man in priest's garments on top of it. Whether the two events are linked is not known, but this is probably why St. Hugh appears on this Church with St Peter.

In the 13th century a separate Leper Hospital was established just to the north of the town. Brackley became more prosperous as the production and processing of a wool boomed. Most of it was sent to Flanders as they were the expert weavers. Several wool merchants made significant profits. There was a weekly market where Goose Green is now, with stalls selling sheep and wool. By permission of King Richard I tournaments or mock battles were held at Bayard's Green, close to the site of Brackley castle. At Easter 1215 when the De Quincey family were the most prominent in the village, and Baron Saher De Quincey was very much opposed to King John, a number of barons came to Brackley with two thousand knights. They drew up a schedule of grievances and a list of proposals which were given to representatives of King John. The King refused to accept them, but the meeting at Brackley was a precursor to Magna Carta a few weeks later. This meeting was repeated 49 years later in 1264 when King Henry III was in conflict with barons led by Simon de Monfort, and once again negotiations failed.

The prosperity of Brackley only lasted for about a century. Scab disease killed a lot of sheep, and from 1316 to 1320 poor harvests led to years of famine at a time when the populations generally were growing. The situation was made even worse by the Black Death plague, so that at one time the population was reduced to only 250.

In the 1480s Bishop Waynflete of Magdalen College, Oxford bought the Hospital (and the Aynho Hospital at the same time) to provide an income for the College. At this time the whole county was suffering as a result of the War of the Roses, and Brackley was no exception, no so much due to battles per se but the troops needing food and fodder as they criss crossed the Midland.

### **3) Forthcoming meetings**

Wednesday 22nd February    What happened when the Romans left Britain?