

A Fairly Complete History and Tour of Aynho Village – updated January 2017

Aynho is a two-part name - 'Ayn' is either a corruption of a Saxon personal name, or more likely the Saxon word for a spring or stream. The 'Hoh' is a Saxon word for a promontory/projecting ridge of land standing on a plain as Aynho does.

The earliest mention (in the Domesday Book) of an owner of the manor of Aynho is Asgar - a Danish thane (knight). He was standard bearer for Edward the Confessor who reigned from 1042 to 1066. (Edward was born at Islip about fifteen miles south east of Aynho, so he probably knew Asgar). The entry showed 3¼ hides (about 400 acres altogether), land for 8 ploughs, a mill and 20 acres of meadow.

Why was Aynho so relatively important in the mid-ten hundreds? Probably because of its location high up overlooking the whole Cherwell valley. There were very few significant houses in existence within a radius of twenty miles at that time, and it is believed that Aynho had a substantial wooden Saxon manor house then.

For example Oxford Castle was not built until 1073, Banbury Castle 1135, Broughton Castle 1300, Rousham House 1635 and Upton House 1695. The first proper Oxford College, University College, wasn't founded until 1249. Apart from Aynho north of Oxford only Sulgrave Manor is recorded as having an Anglo-Saxon Manor House around the late 9th century.

William the Conqueror gave the village to one of his barons, Geoffrey de Mandeville, for helping him win the Battle of Hastings in 1066. From then on until the 1950s an individual family has always owned the village and most of its farms and houses. It is almost certain that he built a defensible stone mansion here.

Aynho passed first to the FitzRichard/FitzRobert family. In 1215 John FitzRobert was one of the 25 barons who witnessed King John putting his seal to the Magna Carta at Runnymede. In 1315 Edward II granted to the Lords of the Manor of Aynho the right to hold a weekly Tuesday market and a four-day fair at Michaelmas. The market was held every week until the late 17th century. Around 1300 a son changed the family name to Clavering.

From 1343 Aynho was held by the Earls of Arundel, although it is doubtful if any of them ever visited Aynho. It is certain however that Lady Arundel, widow of Sir John Arundel, lived in Aynho for some years, as she was buried in the Church and there is a plaque to her memory in the Cartwright chapel.

In 1540 the Manor passed to Rowland Shakerley. In the 1570s it was inherited by Shakerley Marmion, whose son was a dramatist, who attended Lord Williams School in Thame and whose plays were popular in the Court of King Charles 1st. However Shakerley (senior) was often in debt, and in 1611 he sold off some farms to relatives of his. Eventually in 1615 he was forced to sell the remaining estate to Richard Cartwright, a wealthy retired barrister from the Inner Temple, London for £5,250. In 1616 Richard bought the relatives' farms for £3,000.

Where the Shakerleys had been lax in chasing up rents and other debts, Richard, having been a solicitor, lost no time in issuing writs for non-payment. He was a new broom.

Less than thirty years after Richard Cartwright arrived, the Civil War started in October 1642. Richard had died in 1637, but both he and his son, John, had been against the Ship Tax, which was one of the causes of the War. Despite having married the daughter of Sir William Noy, the King's Attorney General (and originator of the Ship Tax), John was a staunch Parliamentarian. He therefore went to live in London at this time.

After the indecisive first battle of the Civil War on 23rd October 1642 at Edgehill, just 12 miles from here as the crow flies, the Roundheads went north. King Charles I eventually came south with his troops towards Aynho, avoiding Banbury. After taking Broughton Castle on 26th October he proceeded to Aynhoe Park House. From here he issued proclamations to the City of London and the City of Westminster "from our Court at Ayno". So for one night Aynho was the capital of England. He then went to Banbury to capture the castle there.

The Royalist troops took the House over, and stationed a garrison here. The Church played an important part at Aynho, as the tower with a 360-degree view of the surrounding countryside made

a very good lookout point over the whole of the Cherwell Valley. The troops spent much of their time in the local taverns, but were always prepared for the occasional skirmishes, which broke out every so often. The Royalist regiments were supported financially by their Colonels, but frequent inactivity and drink led to troubles. It has been suggested by an expert from Oxford University Archaeological Society that troops may have been occupied in building walls around the Park House estate and tunnels under the village in order to limit these activities.

The local populace was put in a terrible position, since armies from both sides continually roamed the countryside plundering at will.

Eventually at the Battle of Naseby in July 1645 Cromwell's army gained the upper hand, and that month the Royalists departed, setting the interior of Aynhoe Park House on fire and reducing it to a shell to prevent the Parliamentarians being able to use it

John Cartwright eventually returned to the remains of his House. He had sufficient money to get Edward Marshall (Charles II's Master Mason, who later worked with Christopher Wren on St. Paul's Cathedral) to design a new interior to replace the one burned down, and the family later got £10,000 compensation for the wartime damage. It was a rectangular house, with a small extension on the eastern end, which was probably a kitchen or food preparation area. At this time the entrance was on the south side, and was accessed by means of the Lime Walk from the Lodge on the sharp right-hand bend on the main Bicester road well to the east of the village.

When John died in October 1676, Richard and he had ruled Aynho for 60 years, but there was a gap, because John's son William had died six months earlier. He had married twice and had several children with his first wife, all of whom had died within weeks. Widowed William had married Ursula Fairfax, and they had one son, Thomas Cartwright, who was only 5 years old.

William's widow and a steward maintained the estate until Thomas came of age.

The House was altered by Thomas Archer between 1707 and 1710. It was he who made the entrance on the northern side as it is now, and he extended the House on both ends but only by a single storey, and added two wings, one on each side, but not connected to the main House. In 1740 the population was 567. The gardens were laid out by Capability Brown in 1761.

Probably the most prominent Cartwright was William Ralph (1771 – 1847). His father died when he was just one year old, so for the next two decades, his mother acted as guardian of the estate, assisted by her second husband, Sir Stephen Cottrell. William Ralph was very keen on hunting, which was quite dangerous in those days. With no proper helmets there was a very real risk that anyone thrown by their horse would be killed. He had three sisters, and each one wrote to him, begging him to give up hunting as they had an absolute fear that if he didn't survive until his 21st birthday, his uncle Welbeck, with four sons would automatically inherit Aynho, and they would be thrown out onto the street. Having lived a life of luxury with plenty of servants, they would be completely unable to fend for themselves.

Within a few years of assuming control of the estate in 1792 he called on John Soane, later Sir John, designer of the Bank of England, to remodel the main part of the House, as it had become old-fashioned. Between 1799 and 1802 Soane increased the height of the Orangery and added rooms above the Library. He also raised the centre of the House, and joined the two wings to the main building, with two archways, the one on the left being open, and the other glazed making rooms. In the interior he relocated Archer's oak staircase from the main hall to the east hall, and increased the size of some windows to let more light in and arranged all the ground floor central doors so that if they are open one can look through a window outside the Library, and see right through to the east end of the Orangery.

Just four days after the Battle of Waterloo a report was received in London from Wellington, which was published in the London Gazette. William Ralph bought a copy of this which is in the Archive.

Later Humphrey Repton produced plans for improving the gardens.

One of the best things that happened during William Ralph's time was the provision of Almshouses by John Baker, a retired Oxford glazier.

William Ralph married twice, having eight children with his first wife and four more with his second.

For anyone who watched the first two series of the BBC drama "Lark Rise to Candleford", you may remember the Squire's second wife in the serial, Lady Adelaide, was described as a very aristocratic lady. The programme was partly autobiographical. The author Flora (not Laura) Thompson was actually born in Juniper Hill, just 4½ miles south east of Aynho. At 14 she went to work at the Post Office and forge in Fringford, three miles to the south. The squire there was not Sir Timothy, but Edward Slater-Harrison, and his second wife (Lady Adelaide) née Emma Cecilia Cartwright was the grand-daughter of William Ralph Cartwright of Aynho by his second wife.

For 50 years (1797-1846) William Ralph was Member of Parliament for Northamptonshire. As an old-style Tory, he was against change. He was a fervent supporter of William Pitt the Younger. He took the job very seriously, and attended most of the sittings in parliament. He fought 14 elections. So far as Aynho was concerned he enjoyed the high life and loved entertaining. In common with many landlords, he arranged for Enclosure of the estate, which was finalised in 1792. This involved abandoning the field strips farmed for 1000 years in favour of enclosed fields that still exist today with hedges and fences. By then all but 450 acres out of the 2240 belonged to the Cartwrights.

However the cost of having the House modernised, plus his love of gambling and his quite disastrous forays into stock-market speculations caused him to run up total debts of £50,000 during his life, of which he managed to repay only £35,000.

His son, Sir Thomas Cartwright, became a diplomat and married Countess Maria Elizabeth von Sandizell, always known as "Lili", daughter of a Bavarian nobleman. In 1846 she came to live in Aynho, but her husband was soon posted abroad. As she had two small children, she stayed in the village, and spent her time in painting scenes mostly of the rooms in the House. Over thirty of these, plus many drawings have been reproduced in a book "Lili at Aynhoe" by Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett and are the only pictures of the house at that time. An experienced art critic who had examined the original paintings came and visited Aynho History Society and gave a talk saying that her pictures are as good as most professional artists. They are extremely detailed, and as such are the best representations of an English country house in the 1830s and 1840s, when of course there were no colour photographs at all

Sir Thomas inherited his father's debts, but he only lived for three further years, and many properties needed repair during that time.

Provision then had to be made for both widows, further adding to the debts. Lili retired to Leamington Spa and lived for 50 years til her death in 1902 aged 97. She is buried here however.

Her son William Cornwallis Cartwright calculated that the only way he could reduce the arrears was to rent out the House, and live abroad, where it would be cheaper. This he did for 30 years.

Things changed in 1881, when his cousin, Major Fairfax Cartwright of Flore died childless, and left a large sum of money and some London properties to the Aynho Cartwrights. Suddenly William was able to pay off most of the debt. He kept every single receipt, and this is a good window on life then. From 1868 to 1885 he was M.P. for Oxfordshire. He became a much-respected correspondent for The Times, focusing on foreign affairs.

William's son, Fairfax Leighton Cartwright, had a diplomatic career in Mexico, Lisbon, Madrid, Munich and Stuttgart. In 1898 he married Maria Chigi-Zondadari, daughter of an old Italian banking family which had produced a pope (Alexander VII in the 1650s). He was knighted in 1908, and later posted as ambassador to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Vienna. He and Lady Cartwright turned the undistinguished Embassy into one of the most fashionable. This was one of the most important postings in the world at that time, because Britain knew it could not influence German policy, but hoped it could change Austria's views. With the help of the French ambassador, Philippe Crozier, he attempted to weaken Austria's reliance on Germany. There was one episode in 1911, which could have changed the history of the world. Austro-Hungary wanted to modernise their armed forces to oppose Germany, and asked the French to supply a huge loan to help. The French were against this, but with Crozier Fairfax realised that Austro-Hungary were opposed to the German Alliance, so they tried to change the French mind to support them. If they had succeeded the First World War might not have happened.

Fairfax sent detailed typed reports every 2 or 3 weeks back to England advising what other governments wanted to do, and what the effect would be on Britain if they succeeded.

Well before the First World War Sir Fairfax predicted how it would start. He wrote "Some day Serbia will set Europe by the ears and bring about a universal war on the continent." He was astute enough to realise that Arch-Duke Franz Ferdinand was a certifiable maniac, who was definitely not fit to inherit his father's empire, and Fairfax told his government so. When he had to retire as Ambassador due to failing eyesight in 1913 he was knighted for a second time as a Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, and he and Lady Cartwright moved into the Grammar House. He died in 1928, and she lived there until her death in 1967.

His son, Richard Cartwright married Elspeth Weir and they had two children, Edward and Elizabeth. Richard a well-respected person became a JP and High Sheriff of Northamptonshire.

The Cartwright family owned most of Aynho until due to financial constraints about a third of Aynho houses were put up for sale in 1941, and more were sold off during the 1950s.

Tragically on 31st March 1954 Richard and his only son were killed in a car accident just outside the village. Due to double death duties, his widow and their young daughter Elizabeth were forced to sell Aynhoe Park to the Country Houses Association, which turned the House into expensive flats for retired people. For several years the House was open to the public one afternoon a week.

The widow and daughter moved into Friars Well, which had been the estate manager's house until 1916, when it was let out on lease, and became somewhat neglected. They had some alterations done to gentrify the house by Raymond Erith, a well-known architect, who had designed The Pediment in Aynho, and was also responsible for the reconstruction of Downing Street in 1958. After the mother remarried in 1960 they both moved to her husband's house in Amersham, Bucks. Lady Cartwright died in 1967, the last Cartwright to live in Aynho.

Elizabeth bought Iford Manor near Bradford-on-Avon, with a large Italianate garden. She married a Mr Hignett, but retained the Cartwright name as Mrs Cartwright-Hignett. Her son William has continued this, and has recently married, so the Cartwright name will carry on.

It wasn't until 2006 that Aynhoe Park House was once again sold to a private person. It is now owned by James Perkins, a relatively young man, who made his money out of raves. He was the first person to manage commercial raves, with security guards, good toilets, etc. He bought the House because he is a devotee of John Soane houses, and he had previously renovated another Soane house, Dowdeswell, near Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. He is a property developer, and has the unusual hobby of collecting plaster casts of statues and friezes from around the world. Most of these were made 200 years ago, and were held in museums all around the world. In the last few years these museums sold them off to provide space for other items, and James bought many of them. People often come from foreign countries to examine his indoor plaster casts because their own statues etc. have weathered away so badly due to pollution and acid rain that they cannot see the details, which are preserved in his casts.

Around 2012 he bought his own coat of arms, which now adorns his gates.

Just before he arrived, Elizabeth Cartwright-Hignett, who had left more than sixty paintings, mostly of family members, and several sets of ceramics, glass and porcelain ornaments and furniture, etc. in the House, came and removed them all. There was also an extensive Meissen dinner service, the plates and dishes of which were painted with scenes of Dresden, some of which were displayed in the Dining room. The rest was kept in the original red leather travelling cases. This was known as the "Waterloo Service", and was understood to have been "liberated" from the battlefield of Waterloo, by General William Cartwright, who had distinguished himself in that battle. However, when this information appeared in History Society meeting minutes, Mrs Cartwright-Hignett emailed to say that sadly this was alas, a complete fiction. When they were opening the house to the public, her father invented the story as he did not know how the service came into the family! It was not until she translated the diaries of her grandmother Lili Cartwright, that she learned that this service was given to her and her husband Sir Thomas Cartwright not long after their marriage by her uncle, the Duke of Rechburg. It had been commissioned by The King of Saxony as a gift to the King of Bavaria who had passed it on to the Duke of Rechburg.

Over the years the Cartwrights had kept quite detailed records of events, expenditure and correspondence, all of which are contained in the Cartwright Archive, consisting of over 100,000 documents, held on loan to the Northamptonshire County Council's Archive Office, which forms a fascinating picture of English country life throughout more than three hundred years. It is this record that Nicholas Cooper drew on extensively for his definitive book on Aynho.

At this time Elizabeth also decided to put the Cartwright Archive up for sale. An American University immediately bid the full asking price of £300,000, so the Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, Lady Juliet Townsend, set up a very high-powered Committee to try to save the Archive for the County Council's Archive Office. With the aid of Lottery Heritage funding enough money was raised, not only to save the Archive, but also to pay for a qualified Archivist to examine it for 2½ years and record the details, and for an excellent exhibition with three double screens depicting the life of the Cartwrights over more than 300 years to be professionally made. This was displayed at Banbury museum for two weeks, and on five days at Aynho. Due to Government staffing cuts the N.C.C. has been unable to find staff to exhibit it elsewhere. However due to the death of two of the Trustees, and the wish of the others to retire, three members of Aynho History Society have recently been appointed Trustees, as we should be better placed to exhibit it locally.

The Tour starts from Blacksmith Hill which was noted in the 1700s for being where craftsmen associated with the building trade lived as owner-occupying cottage freeholders. There were stone masons, plasterers, slaters and carpenters. At the top end of the Hill on the north-east are some very old cottages. It is believed that they used to be called "Pintle Row". These houses are aligned south-west to north-east, whereas the house and bungalows on the south side lie more west to east. Indeed a 1920 photo shows 2 cottages in front of the red-roofed house. You can see from the roof-line that what are today two houses were once four dwellings. Ignoring the red-roofed one the next is the oldest small cottage in Aynho, dating from around 1500. It has a 60-foot well in the front garden, now dried up. One of the oldest Aynho families is the Seccull family. We know from records that Arthur Seacole, an experienced stonemason came to Aynho in the 1690s. He married Elizabeth Knight in 1699, and eventually they inherited her father's tiny house, which is the second one from the east end. The Seccull family were all stonemasons for many generations, well over 200 years, and they mainly built or repaired all the walls. There are over 5 miles of walls surrounding the original Aynhoe Park estate. They also did house repairs and new building work. Later on they moved to various houses in the village.

In the mid-1800s many people emigrated from Aynho. In 1860 two cousins of the Seccull family emigrated, going firstly to South Africa. One went on to Australia; the other settled down in South Africa, married and had a son. He was Arthur William Seccull, who became a cricketer. He was a member of the first South African team to tour England in 1894, and later played in a test match in South Africa when Lord Hawke led an English team there. The son of an Aynho man became a test cricketer (albeit a South African one).

A direct descendant of the Secculls from Australia visited Aynho in 2013, and was shown the homes of Arthur and the last Seccull to live in Aynho, Eli, and his grave.

The next road is Butts Close. The Civil War started in 1642 at the Battle of Edgehill. There is one place here from which on a clear day you can plainly see the edge after which Edgehill is named.

In the 1700s all able-bodied men were required to spend some time every week or month practicing their skill with the bow and arrow for defence purposes. The Butts was the name for the practice grounds. The next road is called Bowmens Lea.

On the left are the Almshouses. We have been extremely lucky in Aynho, since in most villages, in the 1700s and 1800s once a person was too old to work, with no retirement pensions, if their relatives could not support them, they were condemned to the workhouse, which for many was considered a fate worse than death. These almshouses were built in 1821/23 under the will of John Baker. He had been a prosperous glazier in Oxford, and he also owned 79 acres of land in Aynho, left to him by an uncle. When he retired he spent most of his life in Aynho, and he obviously loved this place. He left a substantial sum of money in Trust for 8 almshouses to be built for 4 single men and 4 single women over 50 who had lived or worked in Aynho or his former parish of St. Aldates in Oxford.

They would live rent-free, and in addition would be paid a weekly annuity of 8 shillings for men, and 7 for women, which was quite a princely sum in those days. This was regarded as one of the best things to have been done in Aynho. They are still occupied under the terms of the Trust to this day, but with some changes. The Trustees are the vicar, two churchwardens, two people nominated by the Parish Council, and two co-opted members. With inflation and the Welfare State, annuities are no longer paid. The Trust is not permitted to charge a rent, but the residents pay a maintenance charge, which is the sum assessed by the District Council Rent Officer, less 10%. The occupants are of course entitled to claim Income Support and Housing Benefit if their circumstances qualify for it. The original residents were required to attend Church twice on Sundays.

Until as recently as the 1950s, when council houses were built in Butts Close and The Glebe, and before Bowmens Lea and more recently in the 1960s two estates of modern bungalows were built and one of houses, the village ended on the west side of Butts Close, with the Almshouses sticking out like a sore thumb.

The building on the right was originally Aynho School from 1813 until 1985, when it was decided that the potential number of schoolchildren would soon be only 5, and the pupils were transferred to Charlton. A popular head of the school for 40 years from 1930 to 1970 was Miss Govier, who became Mrs Czeppe. She was a governor after she retired, and continued to live in Skittle Alley.

The last headmaster gave us a talk, and told us that in 1895 the school building was extended to take in the infants, who had previously been housed elsewhere. A day book of the Secculls is in the Archive, which shows that three of them worked on this addition to the school every day from July 13th to October 17th.

The original building was converted into a block of small houses, with additional front gable sections added.

We now pass through the Cartwright Hotel. When the Cartwrights bought the village in 1615 they found that the Red Lion, as it was then, was in a very dilapidated state. They were forced to take the landlady, Widow Bell, to court, and evict her, before making reparations.

In the late 17th century the landlord was a Thomas Norris. He issued his own tokens as coinage, which meant they could only be used at his pub. In 1700, when his widow Mary Norris died, John Puce took over as innkeeper for twenty years until 1720, when he was succeeded by Edward Homan. In 1813 the innkeeper was Edward Holloway.

Its name was changed to The Cartwright Arms in 1821 or shortly thereafter. In 1891 the innkeeper was William Bygrave (also a farmer). In both 1901 and 1911 the innkeeper was Frederick Scott.

Later the pub signpost was topped by a Pope's mitre, because Sir Fairfax Leighton Cartwright (1859-1928) married an Italian countess Donna Maria Chigi-Zondadari – The Chigi family was a very old Italian banking family, a son of theirs became Pope Alexander VII in 1655. The motto on their sign means 'Take the path to honesty'.

You will see that there is an Apricot Room for meetings & parties in the Cartwright Hotel.

There used to be large wooden gates in the archway, which were shut at night. Mail was lowered from the window above by rope if the coach was late. The pub brewed its own beer until 1917. In the 1990s the pub became somewhat run down, and it certainly wasn't the centre of the village that a good hostelry should have been. A new owner wanted to change the name completely, due to the poor reputation it had incurred, but the Parish Council insisted that the Cartwright name should be retained, due to the length of their connection with the village, so a compromise was made. The name was therefore changed to the Cartwright Hotel when it reopened after complete refurbishment in October 2008.

We move on now to Aynhoe Park House.

One of the features of Aynhoe Park is an icehouse. This was completed in February 1804. Ice blocks would have been brought up from the canal in winter by horse and cart, and placed in layers with straw in between for insulation. In this way fresh meat and game could be kept for up to two years in the days before refrigerators.

The egg-shaped underground icehouse was beautifully restored by a local resident in 1999, so it now one of the best preserved in the country.

Moving along we come to Aynho Church. There was almost certainly a church here before the Norman Conquest, but there was definitely one here by the middle of the 12th Century. It is recorded that in 1646 Robert Wilde and another man were both in contention for the position of Rector of Aynho. It was decided that they would each preach a sermon, and the man judged the winner would get the living. When a friend asked Robert how he had got on, he replied: "We have divided it. I got the Ay, he got the No" (Aynho).

Only the 14th Century tower of this remains, as in 1723 the Church was in serious danger of falling down. A local man, Edward Wing, who was a carpenter and probably a mason and had spent most of several years propping up the old Church, came up with a design for a new one. This was agreed, and he oversaw the building of it along the lines of Aynhoe Park House to blend in. At the back of the Church is an 18th century gallery. There are boxed pews, made in this way to minimise draughts for those attending services. In the churchyard many of the oldest gravestones all now illegible have been removed and stacked against the side walls. Hymn tunes are played every day at 9 am, 12 noon, 3 pm and 6 pm. Originally I had thought this to be a recording, but it is in fact a carillon, similar to one of those small music boxes where pins on a revolving drum strike tiny metal strips, making musical notes. Here however it is a huge eight-foot long barrel, with metal studs that hit levers and so move wires to play the church bells. It was erected in 1913, so it was 100 years old in November 2013.

The large building (St. Michael's House) you pass on exiting used to be the Rectory. The present building dates from around 1600. For almost 100 years from 1830 to 1926 three successive Cartwrights were priests living in the House: Stephen Ralph Cartwright 1830 to 1862, Frederick William Cartwright 1862 to 1906 and William Digby Cartwright 1906 to 1926.

Originally the Rectory had a large wing on the northern side, but this was demolished in the 1960s. At one time in the grounds was a wooden building that used to house the Aynho fire engine. Unfortunately it caught fire, with the engine inside, so it couldn't be used to put out the fire! The Rectory became a private house in 1995, when a new Rectory was built behind Aynho Court.

Later that year a toddler playing in the garden nearly fell through a hole in the lawn. This turned out to be a tunnel which originally led from the northern wing towards the Church. It was reopened again in 2009, when I was allowed to go down into it. It is only about 60 or 70 yards long, but it wasn't roughly hewn out, it was very well-built. Both ends were blocked up, but the southern end suggested that it turned right immediately after going under the Rectory wall to the Church. An expert from Oxford University Archaeological Association said that he was almost certain that it was constructed by soldiers during the Civil War to give them something to do.

Opposite the Cartwright Hotel is Aynho Village Hall, which was built in 1929, using stones brought from what was once the Pest House, a place well outside the village, where inhabitants with serious infectious diseases were sent to avoid contamination. Meals were regularly sent to them, and if there were no occupants a woman was paid to clean and air the beds regularly. Inside on the west wall of the Hall is the renovated old Cartwright Arms public house sign, and a page from one of the school logs. Over the kitchen door hangs the school bell.

Immediately to the east of the track leading down to Souldern Church is a bungalow set a long way back from the road. In the 1960s this is where the singer Frank Ifield lived.

Looking far down the road to the east you might be interested to know that during World War Two the grounds of Aynhoe Park from the end of the houses you can see in the distance, right up to the sharp right-hand bend in the main road was the site of one of the biggest Army petrol stores in the country.

No fewer than 200 soldiers were billeted in Nissen huts in the House grounds here and the other side of the road towards what it now The Glebe, and they spent their days ferrying petrol by Scammell flat-bed lorries in four-gallon jerrycans and drums from Aynho railway station sidings up through the Park Lodge entrance on the sharp corner, and building "haystacks" each of 1000 cans. These were stored here until needed by troops in the south of England, and then sent back down to the station, marked for their respective destinations.

In 1944 the remaining stocks were sent down to the south coast, mostly for soldiers to take with them to Normandy, and the remainder went to Shanklin on the Isle of Wight to be sent down the PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) direct to French landing beaches. We know all this because in 2007 a former soldier in his 80s came to Aynho History Society three times to tell us all about it. He donated the money for a piano in the village hall.

We now move back across the road to the Grammar House.

Mary Cartwright, widow of Richard, and mother of John who had left Aynho during the Civil War, died in 1654, having been a widow for 17 years. Under the terms of her will, she left £700 to be spent on building a Grammar School. Part of this was to be invested to bring in £20 per year to pay a schoolmaster, and £10 to put poor boys out as apprentices, the balance to pay for building the school. John hesitated some time before starting on this, as he feared that the sum was not enough, but eventually he sorted out contracts with local builders and other craftsmen. It was built to a very high standard. The schoolmaster's accommodation was on the ground floor to the left, and the classrooms were to the right. Upstairs were the boys' dormitories. 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 mainly for the sons of gentleman farmers, although anyone could pay their way in. They were taught classical Latin and Greek to enable them to enter the professions.

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 and a William Morris designer.

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 Leighton Cartwright, who after retiring modernised it as a Dower House, renamed the Grammar House, and lived there with his wife Lady Cartwright (Maria Chigi). A modern two-storey wing was added at the rear.

Lady Cartwright died in 1967, and the house was subsequently purchased by Elizabeth Watt of The Pediment (which had been built in the 1950s almost opposite). She put a covenant on it, which stipulated that building would not be permitted in the huge garden, which remains to this day. Various families have lived there since.

The actor Richard Harris (an often drunken Irishman whose films included "Cromwell", "A Man called Horse", "The Wild Geese" and who played Dumbledore in the first two Harry Potter films) several times lodged at The Grammar House.

In 2010, the new owner who had just moved into the Grammar House gave a talk to the Gardening Club about the changes she hoped to make to the huge garden. Three years later she invited the Club to see how well it had been completed.

The row of cottages leading to the Cartwright Hotel were built around 1650 and are typical of the time for agricultural labourer's tied houses.

Moving on past the Cartwright, you come to Aynho Village Square. As you approach, behind the two pale green garage doors, on your right was the Apricot Café until 1978. Aynho had its own butcher, in what was later the clock mender's workshop, now renovated as a private house.

Moving into the Square itself, much like most local villages, if you ignore the cars, this view would be almost unchanged from 300, 400 or even 500 years ago. You are standing in the middle of what would have been for hundreds of years the equivalent of today's M40 motorway; this was the main London to Birmingham route. The road used today was only a minor track until the road

Roundtown was made the more usual route in 1924. The sharp bend there was named Wembley Corner after the charabancs that came past ferrying customers to the Great Exhibition held at Wembley in that year. Roundtown would have seen herds of occasionally cattle, but more likely sheep, being driven, i. e. walked, from Wales to London to supply the city with fresh meat and then skins for the tanners and bones to make glue. Every bit of the animal was used. Again until the railways in the 1850s, this journey took up to 8 weeks. It was a regular drover's route. There are stories that some of the animals didn't quite make it through Aynho as the odd one was encouraged through a gate when the drover or his boys were not paying proper attention.

You might be surprised to know that you are standing 456ft above sea level, surprising because if you walk in the fields you will find fossilised sea creatures. There is a mark to this effect on house number 6. Go back to the age of the dinosaurs and you would be under the sea.

From the 17th century to the railway age in the 1850's, stagecoaches were the usual mode of transport for getting across Britain's long-distance toll roads. They had great names like "the Thunderer". They would have stopped at the Red Lion to change horses, and provide a meal for the passengers, or perhaps a bed for the night. There were regular timetabled services between major towns or cities. In fact there were two Inns here as Aynho lay on the route of two main roads, one from London to Birmingham, the other from Buckingham to Chipping Norton. The former used the Red Lion, and the other the White Hart. The stable yard was through the arch.

The White Hart was an Inn from the 1750s to the 1870s. It was first kept by Thomas Bygrave, followed by his wife, and another relative, John Bygrave, is known to have run it during the 1840s. Above the arch was the Pig Club meeting room; this was run like a Christmas Club but with the objective of rearing a pig for major celebrations. Many households kept a pig in their garden. Slaying the pig was a major event. Everything was used: head, brawn, trotters, etc. Bacon being smoked was hung high over the stove. The name "The Old Posting House" is nothing to do with letters, it relates to the post-chaise, another name for a small coach and horses. It is believed that the attic at the top may once have been a cobbler's, as fairly recently pins and nails were found under the floorboards. . It closed as a pub in the 1870s, and became a shop, with the off-licence continuing at the back, entered from Skittle Alley.

On the opposite side of the Square there was another village shop until 1989 so the village was fairly self-sufficient. This shop was run by Mr Eaton during the 1930s and his son after him. The off-licence shop had a very high counter. Children would sneak in and if the lady was serving they would duck down and creep out, as she was very fierce. Both shops watched each other's customers jealously. They would ask what was so special about the opposite shop if they had seen you go in.

For those that think the world revolves around the pub there have been two others in the village. The Bell Inn was just west of what is now the first house in College Fields, down the hill on the way to Banbury from at least 1600 until 1720, when it was pulled down. Known innkeepers were Thomas Collins until his death in 1607, Peter Pruce until his death in 1682, and his son John Pruce from then until he took over running the Red Lion in 1700. Edward Homan then ran it until it closed.

What was originally the Alfred's Head opened by the canal after it was built in 1807. With the coming of the railway it became the Great Western, which it still is today. Richard Howe was the innkeeper in 1881, 1891 and 1901, by which time he was 80. In 1911 his wife Sarah Howe, who was by then only 70, was running it.

It was thirsty work being a farm labourer 100 and more years ago. You didn't want to trust the water, so beer was safer. In fact the whole village used only one well for drinking water approximately outside 24 Roundtown, all the other springs and wells were used for washing etc.

The exception was Aynhoe Park, which had its own supply, which was pumped up from a large tank still in the garden of 2 Banbury Road. The village wells were replaced by taps in the 1940s, with running water in houses coming later.

Catton House first appeared on a map dated 1790. It was the home of successful dairy farmer Mrs Susan Prowett; the Prowetts were a long standing farming family until the time of the Enclosure in 1792. It was until recently the home of a very unusual woman. During the Second World War she spent most of her time in Wormwood Scrubs prison, in London. A little odd you might think, as it was a man's prison. But it was a perfect place to house part of the British secret service. Ian Fleming, the James Bond author, was in Naval Intelligence in the same Section, and Peggy Harmer was a secretary and sometimes saw secret service agents off to France with their radios and invisible inks to create havoc there. She was very attractive in her younger days, so we like to think that she was the model on which he based his "Miss Money Penny". She was actually asked this in a recorded interview, but she just smiled and didn't say "Yes" or "No".

Moving forward as you pass No. 15 look up there and you will see an insurance plaque, this meant that in time of a fire, and bear in mind that until about 110 years ago most of the cottages were thatched, the village fire brigade would come to your aid and be reimbursed by your insurer. No 15 used to be the village bakery.

When the school nurse visited, the children were led down to the old bakehouse in a crocodile and were weighed on the corn-weighing machine. This was the nearest accurate scale to the school. The children enjoyed seeing mice scampering about.

If you now walk down the steep hill which is called Hollow Way you will see the raised pavement known as the Causeway. This is quite a rare architectural feature. It was built to save the villagers from being run over by the carriages or having to walk in the mud. There was only room for one coach at a time, so this is when the coachman would sound his horn to warn pedestrians to keep out of the way, and let the pub ostlers know that they should prepare fresh horses. They would have clattered down the hill to Banbury. But then think of those teams of horses dragging the carriages up the hill!

From the Causeway turn right into Skittle Alley. I call this Aynho's secret street, because it is so tiny and left-angled. We know that they used to play skittles here, or rather more likely on the other side of the wall of No. 2, since the ground here slopes downwards both ways, but the ground the other side of the wall is fairly level. In any event skittles and 16th century coins were found here. This was the entrance to the White Hart's off-licence, which was known as The Jug & Bottle.

No. 1, on the left, has a date 1645 marked in the huge old fireplace. Originally a woodman's yard, with owners John Borton and William Burton, it later became the blacksmiths yard. Several of the Knott family were blacksmiths, then the Watts family, and the last one was Teddy Mobbs.

No. 3 on the right was the home of Eli Seccull, the last member of the family who were stone masons in Aynho for almost 250 years until his death in 1933. Ted Humphris in his book "Apricot Village" says that after he retired Eli fell off his roof, damaging his foot. Too stubborn to go to hospital he set it himself badly and used crutches for the rest of his life.

The house opposite in Blacksmiths Hill is the oldest large dwelling in the village. It was built in 1635, and because it has a high window in the eaves at the end, we are sure that it played a part in the Civil War, which started in 1642, as it was an extremely useful look-out place with a view of the whole Cherwell valley to spot any advancing enemy troops. The first known owner was Edward Jarvis, who farmed 30 acres. He was once fined for digging a well in the road outside his house. A later occupant was Jethro Eely, who was a cutler. He was also treasurer of the Red Lion Friendly Society, a sort of forerunner of Social Security, as it paid benefits to contributing members if they were sick. One more thing about Jethro. In the late 1700s, because of the threat of invasion by Napoleon, who had conquered most of Europe, a Volunteer Defence Force was set up, and the Aynho branch of the Brackley Division had a good fife and drum band. Jethro was a fife player, and he was so good, that he was sent off to Kings Sutton to help the fife players there improve.

The most famous resident of this house was Ted Humphris. Born here in 1901, he left school at 13 to become a gardener's boy at the Park House. He worked hard and learnt very well, and soon rose to become head gardener. Between 1938 and 1965 he showed plants he had grown here at the Royal Horticultural Society's Shows at Westminster, and he won 25 awards, including bronze and silver Lindley medals, two silver Banksian medals, a Sanders gold medal, 7 Awards of Merit and 5 Certificates of Cultural Commendation. His most famous plant was an orchid, "Cattleya

Portia”, which had been bought in Harrods by Lady Cartwright as a plant in an 8-inch pot in 1920. She had given it to Ted and asked him to look after it. He tended it for almost 50 years, and the second time he exhibited it at Westminster in November 1948 there were over 520 blooms, making it the biggest orchid in the world.

Due to this he appeared on television in its early days, about 7 times, four of them with Percy Throver. (The older ones amongst you may remember him as the Alan Titchmarsh of the 1960s). The plant was shown on television in 1960 with over 800 blooms.

Ted wrote two books: “Garden Glory” about his life as a gardener, and “Apricot Village”, a more general book giving snapshots of life in Aynho during his lifetime. For instance as a youngster he remembers sitting on his doorstep and watching Teddy Mobbs the blacksmith at work. Later on he used to help by holding the horses’ heads as they were shod, and later still he used to work the bellows when needed.

He also recalled his father going up Skittle Alley every evening with a large milk jug to buy his pint and a half of ale from the off-licence, which carried on long after the pub had closed down. A pint of beer in 1907 cost 1½ old pence, so you could buy about 16 pints for what is now 10p today. Mind you wages were very low then. As an experienced sawyer his father earned the equivalent of 92p a week, which was a lot more than an ordinary agricultural labourer could get. In the “Lark Rise to Candleford” book a labourer’s wage in the 1890s was only ten shillings.

Regarding apricots, you may remember the Apricot room in the Cartwright Hotel. Aynho is known as the Apricot Village, as apricot trees are planted on many houses walls. It is likely that diplomat Sir Thomas Cartwright might have brought a load of trees back to Aynho, and Sir Fairfax Leighton Cartwright may well have had more planted all round the village during the 1890s.

Tradition for many years had it that the villagers paid part of their rent in apricots. However we know that the Cartwrights were hard-headed businessmen, and would have wanted cash. Nowadays we believe that what actually happened was that apricots are quite difficult to grow and train, so the head gardener would probably have gone round and performed this task, and in return he would have been given a few by everyone in return for his services. In any event we are known as the Apricot Village of England. It is quite possible that someone introduced apricots much earlier, but we are unlikely to be able to prove this.

Nearby you will see a house with a large dovecote on the end wall. Doves or pigeons were a staple addition to meal times. High in the eaves is the filled in former hole for a barn owl. The house set back, now Appletrees, but earlier called Walnut Tree Cottage was the home of the village carrier. He used to collect orders and then go with his horse and cart to Banbury market, to buy and distribute whatever had been asked for.

Going down Blacksmiths Hill, at the bottom you can see opposite a large house, College Farm.

Around 1150 on this site a travellers’ hospital was built, called St. James and St. John Hospital. It was run by Brethren, under a Master, but they were not monks, and it was for the care of the aged, the sick and wayfarers. There was usually a special entrance for the wayfarers, which is illustrated in an old manuscript, and there is an old part of College Farm, which bears a striking resemblance to this. Attached to the main building is a much older and smaller building with the typical architecture of a 12th century kitchen, with high ceilings, two levels of windows and a six-foot thick wall, probably hiding the fireplace used for cooking. This area is believed to be part of the original hospital, because the floor stones are very worn due to many years of use, and this would make it the oldest structure in the village.

The name College Farm derives from 1485, when Bishop Wayneflete of Winchester had recently founded Magdalen College, Oxford. He was looking for a way of financially supporting the College, and he thought that the Hospital with its 160 acres would be one such place. He bought it from the Earl of Arundel, closed the Hospital, and rented the building and land out to well-to-do farmers, hence the name College Farm. It only ceased to be farmhouse in 2001, when the College Fields houses were built there. The current College Farm is actually along the Charlton Road.

Down the road towards Banbury, the first house has a square pond in the garden, which used to be the water store for Aynhoe Park. Water was pumped up to the House twice a day before running water was supplied to the village. Mr and Mrs Monte Crick, who played Dan Archer and Carol Grenville in early episodes of "The Archers of Ambridge", once owned the last house on the right.

Turning left towards the south, across the road just this side of the road towards Deddington are the village stocks. These were in use from 1700 until 1850.

Off the road down towards Deddington, on the left a farm track leads down to Souldern Mill. This is actually now just inside Souldern parish, but it used to be part of the Cartwright estate. The actor Sir John Mills (famous for "The Colditz Story", "Above us the Waves" and "Ice Cold in Alex" to name just some of his more than 120 films) lived here for a few years.

Beyond on Roundtown is another large house, Friar's Well. The house was built around 1760 by the Cartwrights. The initial planting in the park area was by Capability Brown. It was the estate manager's house until 1916, when it was let out on lease, and became somewhat neglected.

The Cartwright mother, Elspeth, and daughter Elizabeth lived there after Aynhoe Park was sold in the 1950s.

Mrs Barbara Astor, who had parted company from her husband, bought the house and later married Viscount Ward, who was Air Minister in the Macmillan government. Lady Ward as she became had further alterations made, adding the back wing of the house incorporating the kitchen and adding additional bedrooms and bathrooms. She altered the cottage at the front, a summerhouse was made out of a cart shed and a walled tennis court was constructed. She also had a garage block and stables built. As she had been a member of the Astor family and knew John Profumo, he sometimes used Friars Well as a place where he could meet Christine Keeler in secret away from prying eyes. On these occasions Miss Keeler regularly attended Aynho Church, where she sat right at the back, and John Profumo came to Lady Ward's funeral here.

Moving back and up Charlton Road, these tiny cottages (known originally as Paradise Row, and then Brackley Road) were built in the early 1800s. At this time the population was growing rapidly. There were insufficient jobs for all the inhabitants. During the 1830s and 1840s almost 200 people emigrated from Aynho alone, mostly to America, although some went to Australia, South Africa and Canada. Despite this the 1841 census reveals that there were 92 people living in these 14 tiny cottages, that is almost 7 in each one!

The Glebe (originally all council houses) was built in 1955/56. Two estates of large bungalows, Cartwright Gardens and The Butts, were built in the 1960s. An estate of houses, Portway Gardens, was built in the early 1970s.

Apart from isolated farms the only other development in Aynho parish has been down at the station and canal area. A little industrial centre grew up here. This started when the Oxford Canal reached Aynho around 1787. Aynho Wharf was enlarged in 1791. This included a boatyard, and a wooden canopy stretching out over the canal to facilitate unloading in wet weather, which still exists today. There was a coal merchants and a pub, originally called The Alfred's Head. Later a small brickyard sprang up, and some time after a cattle market was established nearby.

Lock cottages were built beside the largest and most difficult locks nearby at Nell Bridge and Somerton, for the lock keepers to assist boatmen. Nowadays they are privately owned.

When a second fast line to Paddington was built in 1910 a separate station, Aynho Park, was constructed on the upper line. Today the only businesses apart from the pub are a boatyard at Aynho Wharf, a small haulage company, and some storage facilities where the railway sidings used to be.

Some famous people who lived in Aynho

Sir Ralph Winwood (c1563 – 1617) was born in Aynho, and was educated at St John's College, Oxford. In 1599 he became secretary to Sir Henry Neville, ambassador to France. Two years later he was made Neville's successor. In 1603 he went as ambassador to Holland. He was knighted in 1607. In 1612 he returned to England, and soon became an M.P. and Secretary of State. For a time he was leader of the House of Commons.

In 1616 he helped secure the release of Sir Walter Raleigh from the Tower of London, and urged him on his fatal expedition against the Spanish fleet. It was only his death in 1617 that saved him from the consequences of this.

William Peckover was born in Aynho in 1748. Unusually he decided not to follow in his father's footsteps as a labourer, but to go to sea. At the age of 20 he joined Captain Cook's ship *Endeavour* as an able seaman. He is listed on the ship's crew on all three of Cook's voyages of discovery, being promoted to gunner's mate (*Endeavour* had 20 guns), and eventually to Warrant Officer in charge of supplies on board. He must therefore have been one of Aynho's most-travelled men ever.

However he was not finished there. In 1787 he was listed on the crew of the *Bounty* under Captain Bligh. Bligh first sailed to Tahiti to obtain breadfruit trees, then set course for the Caribbean.

Bligh put Peckover in charge of all trading activities in Tahiti, as he had visited the island four times on the Cook voyages, spoke the language fluently, and had an excellent understanding of Tahitian customs and ways of thinking.

The *Bounty* never reached the Caribbean, as mutiny broke out on board soon after the ship left Tahiti. Peckover was kept below decks during the mutiny and he was only brought up when they were ready to put him into the launch with Bligh and the others.

Bligh and his crew navigated a 23-foot open launch on a 47-day voyage to Timor in the Dutch East Indies. It is thanks to Peckover that the ship's logbook survived. "On Tofua (on 3rd May after seeking supplies), when ordered by Bligh to single-handedly take the ship's log from a cave to the launch through a hostile crowd of natives armed with spears and slings, he did so without hesitation, boldly pushing his way through the warriors who, judging the book to be something of value, made repeated attempts to wrestle it from him. He succeeded in breaking through with the log..." (An entry from the log book.)

The British government dispatched *HMS Pandora* to capture the mutineers. Ten prisoners were eventually repatriated to England and tried in a naval court. A full verbatim report of William Peckover's testimony to this court is on Admiralty file. He continued to serve as gunner on a further seven ships, until at least 1801, but his ultimate fate is unknown.

William Tuckwell (c1785 – 1845) was born in Aynho and attended Aynho Grammar School. He was apprenticed to a Woodstock surgeon, and then became a pupil of Abernethy. At the age of 23 he was elected surgeon to the Radcliffe Infirmary. For 30 years he was the leading Oxford surgeon, said to be "One of the cleverest surgeons of his day".

He was very popular, since his surgery was open for two hours every day to the poor, who streamed in to be treated without a fee. It is said that on his death in 1845, hundreds gathered from village and slum for a final tribute to a man who had dispensed health and healing through so many years.

Philip Speakman Webb (1831 – 1915) was born in Oxford, and was educated at Aynho Grammar School. He was then articled to various firms of builder-architects. He moved to London, and became a junior assistant to G E Street. While there he met William Morris in 1856, and then started his own practice. He designed the Red House in Bexleyheath for William Morris, and later Standen in East Grinstead. Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti were three partners in the interior decorating and furnishing business later to become Morris & Co. Webb and Morris formed an important part of the Arts and Crafts Movement, and founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877. Webb became the treasurer of the revolutionary Socialist League.

Dame Mary Lucy Cartwright DBE, FRSE, FRS (1900 – 1998) was born in Aynho, daughter of Vicar William Digby Cartwright. She studied mathematics at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, being the first woman to graduate with a first class mathematics degree. She returned to Oxford 5 years later to read for her D. Phil. Her thesis was examined by J E Littlewood, with whom she later established an enduring collaboration. In 1930 she went to Girton College, Cambridge to continue working on her doctoral thesis. Attending Littlewood's lectures, she solved one of the problems he posed, with her own theorem, now known as Cartwright's theorem.

She became director of studies in mathematics at Girton.

In 1938 soldiers who were trying to develop a new radar system were having problems with high-powered amplifiers, which were not behaving in the way that they were expected to, and they blamed the manufacturers. At this time Mary Cartwright and Littlewood were working on solving an equation to describe the output of a nonlinear radio amplifier when the input is a pure sine-wave. They discovered that the manufactures were not to blame, but the equation itself. They proved that as you raise the gain of an amplifier, the solutions of the equation become ever more and more irregular. This research led eventually to the Chaos Theory, also known as the "Butterfly Effect" (so described by Edward Lorenz in 1972 "Predictability: Does the flap of a butterfly's wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?"), how small initial differences may lead to large unforeseen consequences over time.

In 1947 she was elected to be a fellow of the Royal Society, and a year later she was appointed Mistress of Girton College. She was the first woman to be President of the London Mathematical Society in 1961/62, and in 1969 she was honoured by the Queen as Dame Commander of The Order of the British Empire.

Peter Cole
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Trustee of The Cartwright of Aynho Archive Trust