

A G M & MINUTES OF THE 101st MEETING OF AYNHO HISTORY SOCIETY HELD AT THE VILLAGE HALL, AYNHO ON WEDNESDAY 29th NOVEMBER 2017

Present: - Rupert Clark – Chairman
Peter Cole – Secretary

1) Annual General Meeting

Rupert announced that he was stepping down as Chairman and Treasurer.

Ted Sutton stands as Interim Chairman; Peter Cole is elected Secretary and Treasurer proposed by Rupert seconded by Keith McClellan.

Ted Sutton will continue to be Village Hall representative.

It was agreed that the Committee should meet as soon as possible to decide on the Society's future in the light of falling numbers. The society's archive is held by Peter.

2) A Delve into the Archive and new research and archaeological finds. Rupert and Peter

Recent television programmes about the Gunpowder Plot and the Cecil family's huge spy network protecting Queen Elizabeth I have refocused attention to the period. In 1583, a plot was hatched by the Throgmorton family to kill her. On the 25th of October a young man **John Somerville** was apprehended in Hollow Way, Aynho on his way to the Red Lion Inn. It was alleged that he waved a pistol about, and declared that he was going to kill Queen Elizabeth as a heretic.

He may have been mentally ill, but his father-in-law was none other than Edward Arden, head of Shakespeare's mother's family. Arden had links to the Throgmorton family, so his house was raided. Somerville was taken to the Tower of London, where he was later found strangled. Arden was tortured on the rack, hanged, drawn and quartered. An interesting footnote is that in one of his plays, Henry VI part 2, Shakespeare names one of his minor characters John Somerville. Northamptonshire families played significant roles in the Gunpowder plot.

One of Aynho's most important characters must be **William Peckover**. He has to be one of the World's great travellers in the light of his travels with Cook and Bligh. During Captain Cook's voyages of discovery some 800 sailors travelled with him. William was unique to have served on all three trips and then with the infamous Bligh. In Sydney harbour there is a fully operational replica of Cook's ship Endeavour. It is not very big, but it is a sturdy ship. The main cabin was originally used for cargo such as coal or timber. The space between the decks is restricted so the ships centre of gravity is low to reduce the risk of capsizing. Therefore, unfortunately, the ceiling is such that the crew were unable to stand upright when below deck. A further link to the period and William is Bligh's chronometer which still exists in the Greenwich collection.

Australia is famous for its convict past but Canada also was a centre for **transported convicts** in the C17th. Thomas Elkerton born in Aynho in 1826, was transported to Ontario, Canada. When the penal colony there became full, a new option became South Australia. James Starkey stole some cotton from William Tyrell of Aynho in 1804. Sentenced to be hanged, he was reprieved and sent to Australia. There he married Mary Manning, who had previously been convicted and sent to Canada. The raised a family in the heart of Sydney.

If early convicts worked away from their barracks they took mobile lock ups in which they slept. Although the landscape and Aborigines were unforgiving some did run for "freedom". The convicts were required to fulfil quotas of piecework or face floggings or extended sentences.

A look at 1920-30's **Aynho Parish Council minutes** is enlightening in terms of their simplicity compared to today. For example, at one meeting in the 1920s the sole item on one agenda was the voting of P.C. Mobbs as constable for the village. In another month the only item was whether there should be Automobile Association signs to indicate that there was a school off Hollow Way. The clerk's salary was £2 per year. In the 1930s one month it was agreed to a weekly rubbish collection. In 1933 a Prince of Wales' Fund was established for the purchase of a playing field.

Hollow Way was closed to through traffic. Somewhat surprisingly as early as then The British Empire Cancer Campaign was set up and posters were displayed around the village. One of the 1934 meetings was held in the Fire Station. February 1935 was about the King's Silver Jubilee. A committee was set up (and a Ladies committee) to raise funds for a tea not exceeding 1 shilling & 6 pence per person. Sports were to be held in the park, and children were to be given an aluminium souvenir mug. Money was also raised to buy wooden benches for the Almshouses, some of which still survive.

Peter said that the most prominent **Royal Visit** to Aynho was four days after the first battle of the Civil War at Edgecote in 1642. King Charles I came south and spent the evening of the 27th October in Aynhoe Park House. John Cartwright being a Republican had fled to London by then. The King had dictated two identical lengthy proclamations for his scribes to write. One was for the City of London and the other for the City of Westminster, in those days separated by fields. The first part of each document was a tirade against those who had falsely sought to oppose his rule. The second was a free pardon for all the sins and misdemeanours anyone had committed if they came over to his side. But if anyone opposed him, they would do so at their peril. These documents were issued "from our Court at Ayno". So for one night Aynho was the capital of England. As John was absent the Cartwright Archive doesn't hold a copy, but Peter had obtained one from the National From Archives, and he read it out.

From an article on the web the life of **Elizabeth Watt** was recalled. The purchaser of a Leica III camera originally made in 1935 wanted to find the original owner. The case contained a letter from an Edinburgh camera dealer describing it, which suggested that the owner needed proof of purchase when taking it abroad. Further investigation proved that it had been sold to Elizabeth Watt. She graduated from Edinburgh University with a degree in law around 1924. She became the first woman in England allowed to practice law without male supervision. Travelling widely overseas in the pre-war years, and in the 1930s Elizabeth started collecting paintings and other works of art. Over the years, Elizabeth socialised with many avant-garde artists, some of whom had connections with Aynho. In 1942 she was living in Aynho before during 1956/1957 she commissioned highly regarded architect Raymond Erith to build a house she named "The Pediment". The cottage in the garden was used to house her growing art collection.

A keen gardener, the grounds were transformed by for example the addition of a 1740 sundial on a new pillar. One of this country's most outstanding croquet sheds with a pineapple on top can be seen in the garden.

In 1967 after the death of Lady (Chigi-Zondadari) Cartwright, Elizabeth Watt moved into the Grammar House, and put a covenant on the garden, which stipulated that building would not be permitted there, which remains to this day. Elizabeth was also incremental in ensuring that the Glebe is an outstanding example of architecturally interesting public housing.

Rupert recalled the Mummers Play that had been performed at Maytime in the Square this summer. Keith said that this had been a traditional Christmas play. There is an Aynho version of it with Father Christmas, St. George, there's no dragon, but there is a Turkish Knight, and a Doctor. The "Baddie" is latterly the Duke of Cumberland, Prince Rupert of Civil War fame. Certainly in this Parliamentary part of the country he would be the villain.

Gerald presented a small part of his Aynho metal detecting finds including produced French coins dating from 1326 to 1380, and a Queen Elizabeth I sixpence dated 1584.

3) Forthcoming Meetings

There **will** be a Meeting on Wednesday January 31st 2018.

The Committee will be holding a meeting next week, and full details of the January meeting should be in the January Newsletter. If you wish our History Society to continue and flourish please come along and support us.