

A Good turnout again and a continuation of “Ainsworth verses the Wider World” – looking at what was happening in Ainsworth compared with the rest of the world at key points in history. After reviewing the main points of his earlier talk, Barry began by looking at some events of Henry VIII’s reign, the time of the first mention of a church in Ainsworth. When Henry’s daughter Elizabeth became Queen there were numerous plots to remove her and even assassinate her, and a cold war existed between England on the one hand and Spain and the Papacy on the other, culminating in the Spanish Armada of 1588. Just a few years earlier, John Saxton ‘s map drawn in 1577 shows Ainsworth as Cockley Chapel and Ainsworth Hall. Following Elizabeth’s death, the Stuart kings ruled until quarrels with parliament led to the Civil War. A troop of Royalist soldiers under the leadership of the Earl of Derby mustered on Cockey Moor in preparation for an attack on Bolton, a parliamentarian stronghold, and in 1644 a fierce battle took place in and around Bolton. It was during this time of the civil war that Commonwealth Commissioners appointed by parliament visited the area and reported that the “Chappell” (in Aynesworth) is fit to be made a Parish Church. However, nothing came of this. The church seems to have housed a mixture of Church of England services and preaching by various “dissenting” religious groups. However a series of Acts of Parliament were passed designed to make life difficult for the nonconformists. The earliest gravestone in Ainsworth churchyard is from this time - Mr Jonathan Dorning who was born in 1690 and died in 1726. Several buildings were constructed in Ainsworth that still remain; The Unitarian Chapel (1715), Knowsley Cottages (1730s), The Duke William (1737) and Hooks Cottage (1773) are among these.

(A copy of the full presentation is available in the “articles” section)