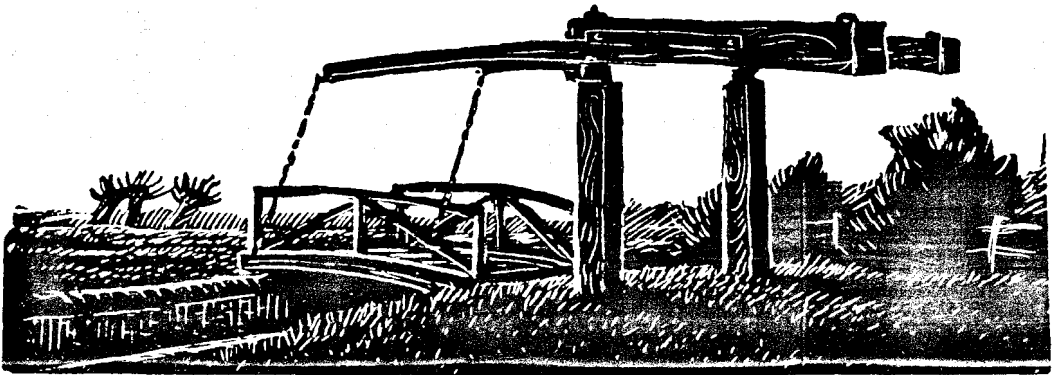


CAKE & COCKHORSE



BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 1975

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Society was founded in 1957 to encourage interest in the history of the town of Banbury and neighbouring parts of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The Magazine **Cake & Cockhorse** is issued to members three times a year. This includes illustrated articles based on original local historical research, as well as recording the Society's activities. Publications include **Old Banbury - a short popular history** by E. R. C. Brinkworth (2nd edition), **New Light on Banbury's Crosses, Roman Banburyshire, Banbury's Poor in 1850, Banbury Castle - a summary of excavations in 1972, The Building and Furnishing of St Mary's Church, Banbury, and Sanderson Miller of Radway and his work at Wroxton**, and a pamphlet **History of Banbury Cross**.

The Society also publishes records volumes. These have included **Clockmaking in Oxfordshire, 1400-1850; South Newington Churchwardens' Accounts 1553-1684; Banbury Marriage Register, 1558-1837** (3 parts) and **Baptism and Burial Register, 1558-1723** (2 parts); **A Victorian M.P. and his Constituents: The Correspondence of H. W. Tancred, 1841-1850**; a new edition of **Shoemaker's Window**; and **Wigginton Constables' Books, 1691-1836**. **Banbury Wills and Inventories, 1591-1650, Bodicote Churchwardens' Accounts, 1700-1822** and **Banbury Politics, 1830-1880** are all well advanced.

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 p. m. in the large Lecture Theatre, Banbury Upper School. Talks on general and local archaeological, historical and architectural subjects are given by invited lecturers. In the summer, excursions to local country houses and churches are arranged. Archaeological excavations and special exhibitions are arranged from time to time.

Membership of the society is open to all, no proposer or seconder being needed. The annual subscription is £3.00 including any records volumes published, or £1.50 if these are excluded. Junior membership is 50p.

Application forms can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary or the Hon. Treasurer.

CAKE & COCKHORSE

The magazine of the Banbury Historical Society. Issued three times a year.

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In the last few years there has been a remarkable surge of interest in village history and there have been numerous successful village exhibitions. News of an even more ambitious event in Bloxham in May is given in this issue (p. 36). As yet, this interest in village history has only partly been reflected in the activities and publications of the Society, though the annual village meetings have of course long enjoyed popularity and will no doubt continue to do so. On the other hand, Banbury has tended to take the lion's share of **Cake and Cockhorse**, and this has no doubt reflected the interests of our main contributors. It is however clear that there is just as much if not more history in the villages of Banburyshire as there is in Banbury itself; for until the 19th Century the villages were much larger and of greater importance relative to Banbury than is now the case. It is also a fact that for a variety of reasons - availability of documents in large numbers, survival of the basically 17th Century villages more or less intact, homogeneity of the region, and preparatory work by the Victoria County History - the villages of Banburyshire are particularly worthy of study.

Mrs Clifton's article in our last issue was commissioned in the hope that it would begin a more or less regular series of articles on aspects of village history. These could, like Mrs Clifton's article, be based on work done for a village exhibition and range over a wide field. They could alternatively examine in detail one of the numerous subjects that of necessity get compressed into a few lines in the Victoria County History. Finally, they could take the form of the ever popular reminiscences, either personal or like Christine Bloxham's taped conversation with Arthur Coles in this issue. Any offers?

Our Cover: is one of the black and white illustrations by Denys Watkins-Pitchford in **Long Boat** by L. T. C. Rolt (Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1944), reproduced by kind permission of Mrs L. T. C. Rolt.

NEWS AND NOTES

Records Publications

Corporate and Records Members will be well aware that the Society has not issued any records volumes for some years, since **Shoemaker's Window** and the **Wigginton Constable's Book** were published. Whilst the economics of records publishing become ever more difficult the current delay has been caused mainly by editorial problems. However it is expected that several volumes will be issued during 1975 and 1976. Mr J. H. Fearon's edition of the 18th Century **Bodicote Churchwardens' Accounts** is now in production. The long-awaited **Banbury Wills and Inventories, 1590-1650**, is now fully edited and Miss Dannatt's lengthy introduction complete, so it is expected to put this into production almost immediately. The Marc Fitch Fund has promised a sizeable grant to help meet production costs. A further volume, to cover the period up to the early 18th Century, is in preparation by Professor R. T. Vann, and will follow closely on the earlier one. The Banbury baptism and burial registers from 1723 to 1837 will make three more volumes.

One book already announced has met with a most frustrating delay - a suitcase containing the virtually complete top copy of the typescript **History of Aynho**, by Marjorie Kennedy, was stolen from a car in London last autumn. Whilst, fortunately, a carbon copy does exist, this is in a very rough state and heavily annotated, in no state for presentation to a printer. Miss Kennedy and her collaborator, Nicholas Cooper, now have the unenviable task of retyping a major part of the book, and actual rewriting from rough notes of part of it. The book is to be published eventually by Roundwood Press, and once a fresh typescript is available, a new publication date will be forecast.

In seeking the continued tolerance of members, we must emphasise that we are dependent on completely honorary editorial work - the subscription and grant income is expended entirely on production costs, whilst editors receive no remuneration whatever for their very time-consuming work.

J. S. W. Gibson

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 1975 are now due - £1.50 for Ordinary members and £3.00 for Record Members. They should be paid to the Hon. Treasurer, 11 Denbigh Close, Banbury OX16 OBQ. Forms for payment by Banker's Order are available. The Treasurer would be glad to receive news of the address of a member, Mrs E. C. Corbett.

Index to Volume Five

As usual an index to the last volume of **Cake and Cockhorse** is being prepared, and with a title page and list of contents will be issued free to all corporate members and those individual members who like to request it. It will probably be some months before it is completed and printed, and a further announcement will then appear.

WORKING THE CUT - Reminiscences of a Boatman

Arthur Coles and his wife were born around the turn of the century. Both of them are from canal families, and they worked on the canal until about twenty-five years ago. They then came to Banbury and Arthur Coles worked for Banbury Corporation. They lived until recently in Bath Cottages, just off the Oxford Road. Both speak with a broad accent which it is almost impossible to transcribe accurately without an expert knowledge of dialect.

His reminiscences of his life as a boatman are fascinating, and they dispel the romantic image of "water gypsies". It is evident that it was a hard life. To earn enough money to live, one had to work long hours, sometimes in difficult conditions - the canals often became iced up in winter, and in summer there was the problem of drought. This is high-lighted by an Oxford Canal Notice:-

"To Lock-Keepers and Boatmen

Take notice, that in consequence of the shortness of water, no lock shall be drawn off when there is a Boat within sight, or a short distance of it, on its way downwards, but such boat shall have the use of the lock before another boat shall pass upwards.

By Order."

The canals were not dredged properly, and, particularly on the Oxford Canal, this meant that the loads had to be lighter, or the boats would tend to become wedged on the bottom.

Many of the boatpeople seem to have been living near the breadline - Arthur Coles talks about trying to tie up away from towns to avoid the temptation of spending money, and admits to supplementing his diet by poaching the odd rabbit. His description of catching fish in the canal is particularly interesting. He was apparently using an eel grieve with spiked tines on which the eel would be speared. This sort of fish spear has been in use, with minor modifications, since stone age times.

Particular emphasis is laid on the effect the Grand Union Carrying Company had on the canals. Arthur Coles lays all the blame for the decline of canal traffic on their mismanagement, and their use of inexperienced crews. This may be a little harsh, as he himself admits that the wages paid by the various carrying companies were inadequate - they tended to employ one man and expect him to pay his own crew. Another important factor which must have influenced the decline of the canals was the impact of the two world wars. Arthur Coles points out that the trainees who replaced the boatpeople did not know what they were doing and managed to damage the boats, the canals, and the confidence of the companies who used the canals. Perhaps one of the reasons why the Grand Union Carrying Company had inadequate crews was that boatpeople coming back after the wars found easier and more remunerative jobs on land rather than going back on the boats.

This interview was recorded in 1973.

Arthur Coles. "I was born at Kidlington. When I first started on the boats, father worked for Oxford. After a time we got a bit bigger family and he worked two boats for Oxford Cement Company by the Rock of Gibraltar. We

worked for them for quite a long time and just before the 1914 war he left and went to work for the Co-op.

You see, I was brought up ever so well, I got some good parents; they could manage well without me so I kept going to different people. . . . So I started up on my own. Didn't have much money to tie up, but got two boats to Bedworth. Well, I had to pay ten shillings for each boat for the hire of it and four shillings for the horse which was twenty-four bobs a week. And then I had two men and I had to give them £1 apiece. Some weeks I only had half a crown or five bob left for myself. Of course, if you paid any less you couldn't get the boatmen, you see. Well, I kept on at that for a bit, then I thought, 'Damn this, this is no good. I'm not getting enough out of it'. So I had another job and didn't like that. I started back with a fisherman, but there wasn't much in it. Very poor money. I left him and went on to hump some stuff for Jesus (College). I went on stone boats, taking the stones about. That wasn't too bad, but it was jolly hard work and you didn't get much money, but you had a full order, about £1, and you could buy plenty of food with that. We didn't earn a lot of money but we managed to live quite all right, and we always had guns and used to shoot a lot of rabbits and partridges with that, or anything coming by. You need to knock them over - used to get into rows with the farmers.

Then I worked for Barlows at Tamworth. I packed him in and went back to a firm on the Trent and Birmingham. They didn't pay much so I packed that up. Then I went on to work for Ables. Then my Dad bought a boat by Northampton, supposed to be a good job, but it was a wash out. It was only to sail the boat, you see. You'd do one journey for them, then he'd say 'Could you get another order 'cos we're very slack of work. Well, we've got plenty of coal but it's not going very well now'.

I worked it out so that I gave my Dad so much a week for the boat and bought my own horse. I paid a bit and owed a bit, and worked for Maudie (Moir) Colliery. I worked for them ten or eleven years - it wasn't too bad. Then I got married - in 1926 was it? Eighteen weeks - I never earned a penny. We managed to get through that. The firm used to allow us thirty shillings a week while doing a bit for Maudie Colliery. After we started back work we had to give them some back each journey we did. . . . We were on our own after that. We had some hard times. Sometimes there was a lot of work, sometimes we had to (wait) up a bit. That was the best work I did, I think for them.

Then I worked for Mayors of Nuneaton on stone boats, then the Grand Union I was silly enough to go and join them you see. After we got on a bit I could see what was going to happen - could ruin my health. You see, every man had got his own boats Well, you see they was saying 'Go and do this and do that', while a good many (boats) got sunk 'cos so may trainees came in, got iron boats, (boatmen) thought 'If we sink them we don't get nothing', so they sold up to them (i. e. the Grand Union). After the Grand Union had been in it some time all the lot went west, you see; 'cos they used to send these boats to papermills - pramloads with kiddies, and they pulled the paper about the papermills. Regular boatman's children weren't allowed off (the boats) As soon as the Grand Union got hold of the jobs they (the regular boatmen) were turned away, and had nothing to do with the Grand Union. It's them that's ruining the canals - The Grand Union, so

don't tell me no different.

..... I went to S. E. Barlow of Tamworth. They used to give work to me Dad, you see. Then me Dad sold up to S. E. Barlow and I worked there until I came here - 24 years this March (1973) I been on the Council ever since."

Christine Bloxham. "What time did you start in the morning?"

Arthur Coles. "Start work 2-3 a. m. Some nights we never stopped - not on the motors. Horses we didn't stop sometimes, but it was heavy for the horses - we done a lot of hours - there's no doubt about that. You got to, you see - you couldn't tie up anywhere, and think 'Oh, I've got a couple of bob to spend', 'cos you hadn't got a couple of bob to spend - you had to try to miss out the towns and stop at the places where there were no shops so you didn't spend anything. We always had some good times - my old Dad, he always told me, 'As long as you've got a good pair of shoes on your foot, and a shirt on, that's your main stay'. He was very good, a good old chap for living, me Dad was. He wouldn't see you starving if he would help it, but he was a pretty tempered fellow. You know, you couldn't seem to do nothing right by him - that's the reason I didn't want to stop with him. I used to go back and help him out when he was pushed and times like that, you know. My mother's still alive outside Rugby - I think she's eighty-eight"

Christine Bloxham. "Did she work on the canal too?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes, she worked all her life till they bought a little cottage near Bridgeworth after the Grand Union set up."

Christine Bloxham. "Was your wife a boatwoman too?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes, a boatwoman all her life. Well, she did a bit of work during the 1914-18 war in Coventry in a brickyard and worked for some ammunition place, and her Dad went back on the canal, same as what I did. That's how we got in tow.

When these people came on - women and girls come out of offices, and onto farms and on the canal - during the war, 'cos they didn't want to go in the war. They put all the boat chaps - well, not all of them, but most of them, in the army. Well, then you see, they got all this lot of damage done - that's how the canals went west.

During the 1914 war, you see, there used to be as many as sixty boats a week going from here (Banbury) to Oxford with the coal. Now you see, there ain't one.

You see they all reckoned to get here for Banbury Fair, if they could, a lot of the boat people. Then they used to look for August to have a wedding. There might be five or six weddings, but there were two holidays to have a wedding. Used to get a good ham, you see, and a piece of beef and one thing and another, a few pickles and that. Well, we enjoyed ourselves. Well, today it's fresh cakes and that - no stomach in it. Well, we were all strong people - boatwomen and boat chaps. There were quite a few boat chaps in Banbury."

Christine Bloxham. "It must have been hard work, wasn't it?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh, it was, yes. That was the whole point, you see. If you worked for any firm, they were only employing you - they wasn't employing nobody else. Then you have got to get your mussus and children on or get a man to come with you. You gotta pay them out of your money, you see, which was all wrong. They should have paid the three of them. Well, if they were to get them back on the canal today, nobody wouldn't do it, honest they wouldn't 'cos the money wouldn't be enough.

Christine Bloxham. "Did you go to any of the canal boat schools?"

Arthur Coles. "I had a little bit of schooling, but what bit I learnt I soon forgot, 'cos, I mean, we wasn't at it long enough. We only used to have a day here, and a day somewhere else. Well, then you were three weeks or a month before you had another day. I got some sisters who are very good scholars - that one at Oxford, she's a very good scholar - she learnt on her own. There's one at Rugby - she's a very good scholar. The other two can read or write a bit, but not very much. I got four brothers - none of them ain't scholars."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you get very attached to your horses?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh yes - had some good hosses and some budduns. I didn't used to like the budduns but the gooduns I used to look after. If it was a bad hoss I didn't keep him long. I used to exchange him for another."

Christine Bloxham. "What sort of horses did you have?"

Arthur Coles. "Black one, sandy one, white ones, donkeys and all. The mules were really the best on the canal, if you got a good one. When I had one I worked with Mr. Gibbs at Bedworth. You see he (the mule) ran away at Rugby and killed a man, with a milk wagon. We didn't know this when my Dad bought it. Well, after a while I know very well he wouldn't be able to work it, 'cos if he see a man coming along with a trilby hat on, he ran backwards, 'cos he was an Australian mule, you see, and they had these big hats on. They reckoned what caused that was firing in the war - cannons going off. They said that was his trouble - 'cos he was a goodun. If you didn't walk on the right side he'd tickle you. He couldn't see very much out of one eye. When I worked for Mr. Gibbs, I said to him 'You'd better let me put this mule in the stable down at the public it wouldn't do to put him in your stable.' 'Oh, I can handle him' he said. 'You'd better be careful', I said, 'if you go up that one side he'll pin you'. 'I can handle him', he said. Well, when he went to feed him he bit him, and he sent for me to go to liberate him. I said 'I told you'. He wouldn't feed him no more. He said, 'You'll have to feed him' But he made me put him in the stable at the public. I think me Dad charged him thirteen pounds for it. Me Dad gave twenty pounds for it - he lost money on it. He found out afterwards that he had run away and killed a man drawing a milk waggon for the Co-op at Rugby."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you have a painted bowl for your horse?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes you see you got them painted up with all the roses and that and the name of the hoss on it, and it cost about half-a-crown a bucket then - well, they used to call them buckets then you see. Oh, I had mine painted all right. Well, sometimes you know, what they call the bobbins, what were stuck through a piece of rope and suspended from the horse harness - used to have them all painted up different colours, with the diamonds or summat put in. Used to be pretty cheap to have it done at the docks, 'cos they didn't earn much then.

Christine Bloxham. "Did you ever do any painting yourself?"

Arthur Coles. "I used to do a bit, but not a lot. I could paint diamonds and that but I'm no good at painting roses."

Christine Bloxham. "Why do you think they painted roses and castles?"

Arthur Coles. "It was an old remedy, you see, when they first started up. It used to show the boats up you see, you got a cabin painted up with red paint, just a few letters - it doesn't look very well, does it? You got a strip here, the name on the back of the boat."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you have the same pair of boats most of the time?"

Arthur Coles. "No - ever so many boats. Had boats about three years, maybe a bit longer. They got a bit shabby you see then they was painted."

Christine Bloxham. "How long did you go on using horse boats?"

Arthur Coles. "Up to Grand Union. It must be forty years since they first started up, if not longer than that. They started up during the war."

Christine Bloxham. "Was one mule strong enough to pull two boats?"

Arthur Coles. "Some of them did, yes. You'd have to have a big one for pulling two. Some of them horses pulled two boats. You see they had the boatmen in the war, the boats had nobody to work them. A firm wouldn't lend you ten pounds then (after the war). If you hadn't got the money, you didn't get the job, unless you could guarantee to start up. It's been some very hard work, it's been a hard life. If they'd paid as they should have paid and stamped everybody's card up, I suppose there wouldn't have been the trade then. You see you come from Highbury to Oxford - I used to reckon a fortnight to do this - then sometimes when you got back in the morning you had to wait for a week for some orders to come in. Sometimes you'd be doing perhaps three or four months as hard as you could tear backwards and forwards, you see. And then you had that laid by . . . (and had to use that to get by on)."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you ever get iced up in winter?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes. That 19 - what was it? That big frost we had about 30 years ago, when all the snow and ice was about - we were snowed in at Coventry. About twenty or thirty of us went and worked at Dunlops of Coventry off the boats. It wasn't too bad at the factory, and we would have stopped, but you couldn't get houses in Coventry or I'd have stopped, 'cos it was a better job than on the boats at the time. - I mean, what money you got, rations and all was about, well you'd go in their canteens and have a damn good dinner. You could even have your evening meal and all in there. That was a good help to you. You see, on the boats, you only got the bare rations, no extra rations. They used to let you have a bit of extra tea and extra sugar and you could get an extra bit of cheese, but that wasn't much - about enough to catch a mouse. You see, I didn't do too bad 'cos I used to shoot rabbits or anything what come in my reach, pheasants and all, which was against the law. And fish, you used to get fish out of the canal. You see when you are going along, when the fishing season's on all the big ones - pike - used to be underneath the nets. We used to have a stick up to here - as long as you want it - a long stick, and then you had six tines on, when you shoved that in them, out it had got to come - they couldn't get off. 'Cos that was cruelty you had to do it in those times. A lot of people used to make a little netting and catch a few like that, but you see it was all poaching, if ever you got caught, you see, that was your bad luck. There were times in Banbury, man used to sell a little corn to the boat chaps. I was well on the way to keeping a horse that way - he wants plenty to eat, a horse, if he's going to do any work - well that would cost your £1 a week to keep a horse, you see. You'd have three bushels of hay, a load of chaff and that would work out out about £1 - 19s. 6d. If you had a bit of bran in it, used to work out at twenty two shillings. Well, you used to get your horse shod at five shillings. Sometimes they would stand about a month, other times they'd knock a pair out a fortnight. That's the trouble you see, if you got a bad horse, who was doing you a bit of harm, you gotta get rid of him, and get another one, if you had the chance. You'd come all the way from Nuneaton up to Banbury here, for about £2. 6s. a time that's to feed your horse and pay your mate or whoever you've got working with you - you've got to chuck it out yourselves, get back and do another two to Coventry 'cos it was what you called a short journey, and you didn't do so bad that way, but you got to do the hours to make a fair good living - that's when me and me brother worked together, we didn't used to talk - that's why we did all right."

Christine Bloxham. "What sort of cargoes did you carry apart from coal?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh, used to carry stones, hand-picked stones, wheat, steel, straw bales, sugar, anything what they'd got when we was on the runs. Not this area - it was only coal in this area and cement. Sometimes we used to go to Coventry with cement, sometimes went to Birmingham, sometimes you'd have three or four tons for up here for these different little places - Banbury want three or four tons perhaps, might be six tons, might be ten ton. And then one firm you see, used to start off from Oxford; Kidlington was where they start off from. You'd get perhaps twenty or thirty sacks of wheat from that farm, then from another one look, you'd keep coming up till you got to Aynho and you'd perhaps have about sixty ton on the two boats. You used to

take that to Birmingham and Walsall."

Christine Bloxham. "Were there any special canal pubs you used to go to?"

Arthur Coles. "No - any on them. There were certain pubs on the canal we allus used to use 'cos they had stables, you see, for the horses to go in. Well, you see, when they come to Banbury the boatpeople they always used to use the Leather Bottle or The Smugglers or the Golden Lion - and there used to be another one at Twyford, I should say that's done away with years ago. And there was another one at Aynho what we used to go into, then you got to Heyford and there's another one there - The Rocks of Gibraltar, well, Enslow its real name, but they always call it the Rocks of Gibraltar; then you get down to Kidlington and then you got to Wolvercote or Oxford. When you got up to Fenny Compton you wouldn't get another one till you got to Cropredy, - well you would at Claydon if you like to go out into the fields to it, but we allus used to go to the pub that was close to, if we wanted a drink."

Christine Bloxham. "Were there many children aboard the boats?"

Arthur Coles. "Quite a lot on the boats. There was nine of us brought up on the boats - well more or less."

Christine Bloxham. "How did you manage, all sleeping in two cabins?"

Arthur Coles. "Well, we had a big bed - perhaps three or four of you would have to get on that, and then what you call a side bed - what you might call a little chair in a house - well, two on you would sleep on some of them. Oh, you could sleep all right, but it was pretty tight and I'm not saying there was a lot of room between you. It were just nice for about two on you to sleep together. Of course, you could lay along the floor if you wanted to."

Christine Bloxham. "Did the children have to work too, leading the horses and that sort of thing?"

Arthur Coles. "Well, they used to get off and be on them sometimes, till they were tired, then they'd want to get off. You'd got to do someat - steer the boat if you were man enough, or ride the horse along.

You was happy sometimes - you'd get off the old horse and touch him up a bit and get a jug or a can and get a few blackberries as you walked along."

Christine Bloxham. "I don't suppose you mixed with other children very much?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh, mixed up pretty well - the boat people did. They used to have squabbles, fights, something like that and got over it."

Christine Bloxham. "They had a great reputation for fighting, didn't they?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh, yes - but they were allus friendly afterwards. They's

never fight with knives or guns like, they do today. If you had a good hiding, that was your affair. Oh, there's been some good fights on the canal side - there's no doubt about that. Mostly it was a race for the lock, you see. You see, you'd got a boat and he wouldn't let you pass by, and you'd got to the lock and got to have a bit of a scrap and have no doubt about it. Some boats wanted to go three or four times faster than others. Some boats on the canal only wanted to go at a certain pace, and used to do their day's work and that was it - they'd go from here to there and wouldn't go a bit further - not that day. If they had the chance they wouldn't start early the next day. Well, some on us would want to go a bit further on, you see - to get there first."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you have problems with drought in the summer?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh yes - used to have to stop at all these locks up here, at one time for turns - that used to make it awkward for you - I mean they'd say, come a bit lighter and you couldn't put so much on your load. I've always said those canals were only made for twenty-three tons. You see you used to bring thirty and thirty-five tons - thirty-five ton was the most I took down to Wolvercote Paper Mill."

Christine Bloxham. "How many boats was that in?"

Arthur Coles. "One boat - I've had two boats, one boat, three boats just according."

Christine Bloxham. "How would you manage with three boats - one person steering each boat?"

Arthur Coles. "Well, you'd have to get more people, you see, borrow somebody's boyos, summat like that. If anybody had got a boy they could spare, they'd let you have him, you see."

Christine Bloxham. "What sort of age did the boys start working?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh - as soon as they could run about. As soon as they could toddle about they'd do a bit of summat. Oh, when you was about eight or nine years old you could steer the boat along all right - in the daylight. In the dark it was a bit off."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you have these beautiful oil lamps for lighting you through tunnels?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes. At the last part they were all electric on the canals - you could see better with them."

Christine Bloxham. "How did the women manage? Did they have to stop and do their washing on the canal bank?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes - when they stopped at night or were waiting to be

unloaded or loaded up. Sometimes you see, you could get it done by somebody else. Somebody used to take in washing - you'd leave a bundle with them till you came back, then you'd pick up your bundle and leave another bundle to pick up when you came the other way."

Christine Bloxham. "I suppose you could only do that if you were on regular routes."

Arthur Coles. "Yes. When you go up to London there used to be a lot of the old boatwomen at Braunston and Rugby used to take in washing, you see. Well, you'd get quite a lot done that time of day for half a crown."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you have to load and unload your own goods?"

Arthur Coles. "We used to unload them sometimes but it was very rarely we had to load them - they used to load them for us, you see. The only stuff we had to load on our own was bagged stuff - or timber - you had to put that in your own boat, but stones, coals (they) used to chuck them in trucks and they used to come down and chute to you. But if you were loading goods or anything in London - it doesn't matter who it was, or Birmingham, you'd got to put it in on your own and keep check how much you got in. If you were any short you'd be on the carpet."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you wear the bright coloured belts?"

Arthur Coles. "Well - we used to have them braces and that, one thing and another. You used to have a little brass buckle on here, like crochet in some places. Cowes they used to make them for about five shillings at one time."

Christine Bloxham. "Did your horse have ear-caps?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes."

Christine Bloxham. "Did the women have the sun bonnets and the long skirts?"

Arthur Coles. "Some of them did, yes. I don't think they looked smarter than what they do today in them."

Christine Bloxham. "It must have been very difficult to manage a boat in a long dress."

Arthur Coles. "Well, I don't know. They used to get them dirty I suppose at the bottom. The worst thing was when they fell in the water - they were heavier to pull out."

Christine Bloxham. "Did people often fall in?"

Arthur Coles. "Oh - ah! Used to fall in! It was quite easy to fall in there. A lot of people got drowned in the canals, you know - terrible lot."

Christine Bloxham. "I suppose it was particularly difficult at night?"

Arthur Coles. "Yes - especially when it was frosty. You had to be ever so careful. It didn't matter how careful sometimes, you probably had to go in."

Christine Bloxham. "Did you make your own ram's heads?"

Arthur Coles. "Yeah."

Christine Bloxham. "Where did you get the horse's tails from?"

Arthur Coles. "Off Mr. Pain down here (Banbury) - I think it was about ten bob he used to charge you. Of course, he killed them, salt them and that. They sold quite a lot they did down there. Long Buckby had them and all - well, any place where they used to kill horses and that."

Christine Bloxham. "What did you make from the ropes?"

Arthur Coles. "All sorts of different things. That's what we call a half-hitch bumper. You see, if you were making a decent one you'd want about ninety yards of rope for a big one - I mean the big shape."

Christine Bloxham. "That must have been quite expensive."

Arthur Coles. "Well - that time of day you could get them for five shillings a line. Well, I used to go along - they'd last you about three weeks with your horse pulling the boat about, well, then after that you'd make that sort of thing with an old rope."

Christine Bloxham. "Was there any reason for making those traditional rope designs?"

Arthur Coles. "No - it was more a hobby, you see. I made no end of Turk's Heads for different people. A lot of people, they could make them, but they'd got the tucks too short - well I used to make them big tucks you see. I used to make no end for different people. It only used to take about ten minutes to make one. It wouldn't take much longer if you just got the size of the rudder you wanted. You see when you measured a rudder up you'd want about that much play with your rope, then as you worked it all round you'd just be able to pull it on tight. We made some for a bloke once - I'll never forget that - he said - 'Well, how do you keep them clean' and one bloke shouted up 'Whitewash em!'. He got some white paint and painted his one!"



Traditional decoration, rope work, and "ram's head" (rudder) mentioned in the text.

JAMES SUTTON - A Presbyterian Preacher

The Bodleian Library has recently bought an interesting little volume concerning James Sutton, Presbyterian Preacher of Sheep Street, Banbury (referenced MS. Top. Oxon. e. 520). Sutton died on 2 March 1674 aged only thirty,¹ and the volume was evidently written soon after his death, perhaps as a kind of memorial to him. It is now in poor condition, but it was once a handsome little book, bound in leather and decorated with gold tooling. It contains a copy of the sermon preached at Sutton's funeral by his friend, Robert Clarke, rector of nearby Drayton, some biographical notes on Sutton, and finally pious reflections transcribed from Sutton's 'vade mecum' or little pocket book wherein he wrote down many excellent heads for meditation and practise.²

The biographical notes are particularly interesting and they add a lot to the few facts which were already known about Sutton's brief career and about his family. Sutton was the son of another James Sutton who was rector of Fenny Compton, Warwicks., from 1633 until his death in 1649.³ The younger James matriculated from Magdalen Hall in 1660, but 'his residence in y^e University of Oxford (which was about 3 years) was contracted by y^e iniquity of y^e time, it being judged both by his dear Mother and himself not safe for him to abide in a place where ungodliness was breaking in like water, and wickednesse like a mighty stream'. Sutton's biographer appears to be referring to episcopal rather than Presbyterian ordination when he continues:

It was much in his heart to put his hand to Christ's plough in y^e ministry of y^e Gospell and because he could not in conscience make his entrance into the ministry in the ordinary way of ordination he did resolve (upon y^e advice and encouragement of some faithfull Ministers) to preach y^e Gospell in y^e condition of a Candidate or Probationer, and truly in y^e judgment of those who well understood y^e great businesse of preaching, he passed for a Workman y^t needed not be ashamed.⁴

Although Sutton applied for a licence as a Presbyterian preacher under the Declaration of Indulgence on 11 May 1672,⁵ he still did not appear to some of his contemporaries to be firmly committed to a nonconformist career. Only four days before, John Allington, churchwarden and Burgess of Banbury, had presented him for 'using the office of a preacher not yett having obtained episcopall ordination'.⁶

We are told that Sutton lived with his sisters after his mother's death: 'He was to them a sweet companion and counsellour, and indeed such was y^e agreement between y^e brother and sisters y^t their house might be stiled (in a good sense) the family of love.'⁷ There seem to have been just two sisters both older than James, Hannah born in 1636 and Mary born in 1641.⁸ Mary married Samuel Statham, another Banbury dissenting preacher, in 1681,⁹ and in her will of 1692 she refers to her sister Hannah as the wife of William Wagstaffe of Calthorpe, gentleman.¹⁰ While the sisters, as yet unmarried, lived with their brother, the family apparently kept a boarding school for girls of gentle birth. Sutton's biographer tells how, in his last illness, James 'desired y^t y^e young gentlewomen (scholars and boarders in y^e house) might be called to him'. He talked to them of death,

and withall told them y^t an interest in Christ would stand them in more stead than their portions, and all their outward interests. Afterwards (having perceived that some of y^e Gentlewomen had melted into tears) out of his tendernesse of them, he seemed to repent y^t he had called for them or spoken to them.¹¹

Immediately after John Allington's presentment of 'M^r James Sutton' as an unlicensed preacher referred to above, the churchwarden went on to complain of a 'M^{rs} Hanna scoolemistris, not comming to divine service, nor any scollers of hers.' This has hitherto been presumed to refer to a school kept by a Mrs Hanna,¹² but the passage quoted above suggests that it is Sutton's elder sister who is here being referred to as 'Mistress Hanna[h]'. Allington has later annotated this bit of his presentment: 'Her house being now a Conventicle house, M^r Samuells Wells speaker'. A licence for Samuel Wells to preach in Sutton's house was issued on 29 May 1672,¹³ whereas there is no record of any licence for dissenters to use the house of a 'Mrs Hanna'.

The last owner of the volume before it came to the Bodleian was the Honourable Robert Gathorne-Hardy of Stanford Dingley, Berks., but nothing is known of its earlier history. The Bodleian bought it as lot 381 in Sotheby's sale of 15-16 October 1973.

D. M. Barratt

References

1. His age is known from a monumental inscription on his grave in the old Banbury parish church. The inscription is given both in this MS. (fol. 17^v), and in E. Draper and W. Potts, *The Parish Church, S. Mary's, Banbury*, 1907, p. 71.
2. MS. Top. Oxon. e. 520, fol. 15^v.
3. W. Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire*, 1730, 1, p. 520. Sutton, senior, was buried on 20 September 1649 (Fenny Compton parish register Warwick D. R. O. 103/1).
4. MS. Top. Oxon. e. 520, fol. 14^v.
5. G. Lyon Turner, *Original records of early nonconformity under persecution and indulgence*, 1914, 111, pp. 558-9.
6. *The churchwardens' presentments in the Oxfordshire peculiars of Dorchester, Thame and Banbury*, ed. S. A. Peyton, Oxon. Rec. Soc., vol. X, 1928, p. 219. Peyton transcribed the churchwarden's name as '? Atterton' (p. 221), but it seems to me fairly clearly 'Allington' (Bodleian: MS. Archd. papers Oxon. b. 52, fol. 52).
7. MS. Top. Oxon. e. 520, fol. 16.
8. Baptised at Fenny Compton on 10 April 1636 and 20 April 1641 respectively. The only other child of James Sutton recorded in the register is a son, Thomas, baptised on 30 March 1634, and I can find no later reference to him. The register is, however, very incomplete from 1642 and 1660, and there is no record of the baptism of the younger James who must have been born in 1642 or early 1643.
9. *Marriage register of Banbury, 1, 1558-1724*, ed. J. S. W. Gibson, Banbury

Historical Soc., Vol. 2, 1960, p.115; Draper and Potts, op. cit., p.72. In **The Victoria History of the County of Oxford** X, 1972, p.103, Statham is mistakenly referred to as Sutton's son-in-law, rather than brother-in-law. 10. Bodleian: MS. Wills Peculiars 51/4/45. I have not been able to find the date or place of Hannah's marriage.

11. MS. Top. Oxon. e.520, fol.16^v.

12. V. C. H. Oxon. X, pp.112, 121; **Baptism and burial register of Banbury, II, 1653-1723**, Banbury Hist. Soc., Vol. 9, 1968, p. xi.

13. Lyon Turner, loc. cit. Wells was the Commonwealth vicar of Banbury who had been ejected at the Restoration, see A. G. Matthews, **Calamy Revised**, 1934, p. 520.

HATCHMENTS IN BRITAIN, 1: Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire, ed. Peter Summers, Phillimore, 1974. xiv, 114 pp. Illus. £2.00

Hatchments are not unfamiliar sights in many old churches - those diamond-shaped coats-of-arms, often blackened with age and hung high up in remote and ill-lit corners of the building. Their origin was in the medieval achievement - shield, helm, etc. - carried at the funeral of a noble or a knight - reduced for convenience to a mere painted board, and hung outside the house during the period of mourning, afterwards being placed in the church. This initial exposure to the elements cannot have helped their eventual survival.

Indeed only a small proportion can have survived, for even in recent years it has been known for them to be thrown out of churches, whilst it is understandable that funds are rarely available for this restoration. Nevertheless they form a decorative feature in any church, and to the antiquary - herald, genealogist and local historian - can have considerable significance.

This book is the first in a series which it is hoped will cover the whole country - the first attempt at a national survey. The work of visiting all the churches, attempting to record the hatchments that are visible - a far from easy task - has been undertaken by a different person for each county: R. J. Kitchin for Northamptonshire, G. A. Harrison for Warwickshire, and W. A. Peplow for Worcestershire. Listed parish by parish, for each hatchment there is given the heraldic blazon, the motto, and the identity of the person commemorated, usually with a reference to their parents, spouse and date of death.

For Northamptonshire an earlier survey had been made, by Christopher Markham in 1910, but since then 13 had disappeared whilst Mr Kitchin was able to discover 40 more, as well as correcting some inaccuracies. In the Banbury area there are hatchments at Canons Ashby, Fawsley, Middleton Cheney and Thenford. In Warwickshire the only nearby examples are at Compton Wynyates, but there is a magnificent series of twelve for the Earls and Marquesses of Northampton and their wives.

The book is neatly produced, with illustrations of three hatchments, one for each county, and a most useful line drawing showing the significance of the divisions of shields and their backgrounds, and a most attractive full-colour cover. It is to be hoped that the volume covering Oxfordshire will appear soon, with a guide to the splendid display in Broughton Church.

J. S. W. Gibson

ASTERCOTE, THE WHISPERING KNIGHTS, THE DRIFTWAY, THE GHOST OF THOMAS KEMPE, all by Penelope Lively, Heinemann, 1970-1974

Mrs Lively writes for the "junior" reader, but after a diet of the hackneyed themes of "adult" novels, what a refreshing return it is to the 10-15 year old's viewpoint. Moreover her stories are set in north Oxfordshire and the Banbury area, and, whilst firmly based in the 1970s they are all imbued with a sense of history and a recapturing of the past.

Astercote is the name of a medieval village, depopulated in the Black Death and its site swallowed up by woodland, the chalice from its ruined church miraculously preserved by a family who have farmed the locality ever since. The story centres round the fears in the nearby village that its disappearance will bring about a return of the plague.

The Whispering Knights is the name given to an ancient stone circle, clearly based on the Rollright Stones, though the description of the country town is as clearly Witney, not Chipping Norton. Some children unwittingly raise the undying witch embodied in Morgan le Fay. The exciting story of their 'battles' with her evil presence is frighteningly realistic and contemporary even though they are fighting 'magic'.

Paul, aged 11, and his 7-year old sister, actually live in Banbury, but are running away to their grandmother, who lives at Cold Higham, along **The Driftway**, the ancient Banbury Lane through Thorpe Mandeville and Culworth. They are helped on their way by an old carrier with a cart and horse. As they travel the old route, often along green lanes, Paul continually finds himself present at events from the past, hearing the thoughts and feelings of participants, a boy at the battle against the Danes at Danesmoor (near Edgcote), a boy out scouting for his tribe when the land was nearly all forest, a stable lad at Culworth attempting to turn highwayman, and the highwayman himself, Driftway Jim - apprehended in 1743 - was he a real historical character, one wonders, and, if not, what a pity the author didn't instead make use of the genuine Culworth Gang of the later 18th Century. A fleeing parliamentary soldier from the battle of Edgehill is another - that other battle, at Cropredy Bridge, would have been nearer their route, but Mrs Lively conveys very well the horror of that first major clash of arms in the civil war, whilst by the time of Cropredy Bridge troops would have been more used to battle. The last portrait is a touching one of the plight of the poor, pregnant widow, a vagrant, chivvied from parish to parish, fearful of incurring paupers and their children as charges on their rates. Altogether an absorbing book, with vivid portraits of realistic, ordinary people, their different ways of thinking revealingly displayed.

The Ghost of Thomas Kempe is a poltergeist who plagues a boy living in a thinly-disguised Eynsham, near Witney. Kempe had been an apothecary and general 'magician' there in the early 17th Century, and when his 'spirit' is unintentionally released again in the 1970s, he expects to resume his former position in the village, objecting violently to those who have superseded him, be they doctor, chemist or television weather forecaster. Once again the way a 17th Century man might react to the 20th Century is shown both entertainingly and sympathetically, with a touching reminder that inside every grown-up is buried the child they once were.

J. S. W. Gibson

THE CHANGING ENGLISH VILLAGE (published May 1974 at £5.50 by The Roundwood Press)

The Changing English Village is sub-titled, 'A History of Bledington, Gloucestershire in its setting, 1066-1914'. The author, Miss Ashby, is better known for her biography of her Banburyshire father, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe. Here she has taken up the challenge of interpreting change in a rural setting over far more than the span of one man's life. Those familiar with her earlier books will not be surprised by the sympathy and sensitivity of the writing which would make it an excellent example of the history of one locality. However, it attempts to consider Bledington as the 'archetype' of all English villages, and the story which develops is that of the ever-changing pattern of communal existence, moulded continually by external factors.

It is, therefore, parish history but not parochial. For Miss Ashby chooses some over-arching themes, of which the shock of the 'new agriculture' on the sense of community makes the strongest impact. I found these more absorbing than the discharge of a clearly felt duty to relate Bledington at each point to major national developments. If we were to take battles, great men and kings as significant features the Bledington result would be: very tenuous Saxon connections with the battle of Hastings and Irish connections with the battle of Mickleton; a young Warren Hastings mingling with local children at Churchill School (and Miss Ashby confesses the enormous side-track which the Hastings family proves to be); finally the impact of Queen Victoria and the royal train at Kingham Junction: 'We saw nothing of the queen but her bathwater'.

Bledington, on the heavy clays of the upper Evenlode, is not 'typical' of most of the ironstone villages round Banbury. Its long connection with Winchcombe Abbey also sets it apart, though why so many of the villages of this monastic estate - Bledington and Enstone - experience undenominational Board Schools after 1870 is intriguing. Miss Ashby has quarried deeply into local records, and uses extensively the two institutional archives, Winchcombe Abbey and Christ Church, as well as a mass of title deeds and a stray smith's ledger for the late eighteenth century. She is less lucky with inventories (one before 1677) and the parish register (nothing for 1538-1703), which is a pity since these are the documents which so helped W. G. Hoskins to describe Wigston Magna (in *The Midland Peasant*) and E. A. Wrigley to investigate the people of Colyton, in Devon.

The attempt to recreate the size, and accommodation, of Bledington, whose pre-census population varies from 90 to 274 (in so far as reliance can be placed on these estimates), is a most valuable part of this book. The uniquely Gloucestershire sources, Smith's *Men and Armour 1608*, Sir Robert Atkyns, 1712 and Samuel Rudder, 1779 (not 1770, as in the text), are used, as well as many other national listings. Miss Ashby does not make use of the Cromwellian survey of 1650 which gives a rounded 40 families for the village, not of Bishop Hooper's visitation of 1551 with a rounded 100 communicants. I am indebted to Dr. Alicia Percival's article of Gloucestershire Village Populations in *Local Population Studies No. 8* (Spring 1972) for this information; what an asset it would be to have similar information readily available to Oxfordshire local historians! We need more probings of this kind, though to be fair the main emphasis of Miss Ashby's

book lies with landed farming families brought to life from the title deeds.

There is a great deal too for the historian of the landscape, and even for the antiquarian. The mask-stops in the south window of the church, the churchwarden's initials on the restored beams, and the disinterred stones which served as field-stops, all of these would delight the hearts of a Banbury Historical Society's summer excursion. Meanwhile, I can heartily recommend this book for enjoyment and later, constant reference.

G. R. Stevenson

THE OXFORDSHIRE LANDSCAPE by F. Emery
(240pp illustrated, Hodder and Stoughton, 1974, £3.50)

This is not a layman's guide to all that is pleasing to the eye in the Oxfordshire Countryside. As the title suggests it is made of sterner stuff and demands some basic understanding of the language of the field historian. Having been written by a geographer there is the added assurance that maps have been included in chapters referring to the analysis of man/land relationships in Oxfordshire past and present.

Overall the work is a scholarly examination of the physical, economic and social factors which have been instrumental in bringing about changes in landscape phenomena such as woodlands, field patterns and land use, and the shape and size of settlements. Examples of such changes are taken from parts of the county which are as widely separated as the Redlands of the Banbury area and the Chilterns dip slope. These are introduced to support the text rather than as parts of a conscious attempt to analyse Oxfordshire region by region. Readers are constantly referred back to previous observations and in this way Mr. Emery achieves a very effective form of continuity of themes.

One of the most important lessons to be learnt from this book is that it is always unwise to make assumptions about physical and human landscape features. Not only must these be examined in field and photographic survey but they need to be mapped so that their character at different times is recorded. In this respect it is particularly interesting to note Mr. Emery's references to the historical maps of the Ordnance Survey and to the substantial map records compiled by Mrs V. Wickham-Steed.

THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LANDSCAPE by J. M. Steane
(320pp illustrated, Hodder and Stoughton, 1974, £3.95)

In the editor's introduction to the series of books called the **Making of the English Landscape**, W. G. Hoskins says this "..... to those who know how to read (Landscape) aright, (it) is the richest historical record we possess." This observation can be used to highlight the particular excellence of Mr. Steane's research which enables the reader to trace the evolution of the Northamptonshire landscape from its prehistoric origins through in turn the formative period of Anglo-Saxon colonisation, the complex early mediaeval period of the 11th Century, the deserted village phase in the 14th Century and 15th Century, the two periods of enclosure movement, the Victorian age of town growth aided by a rapid expansion of communications and finally the overlay of post 1918 phenomena.

Each of the above sections is characterised by a clear exposition and supported by many and well chosen photographs. These are accompanied by useful synopses of what can be seen and special mention is made of the inter-relationship of buildings and the varying impact on the physical landscape of the events of different historical periods.

Interspersed with the text are maps which reflect the author's essential roles as a historian and a field worker. If the maps lose something through over reduction and failure to adopt the latest methods for plotting symbols and representing shading, they do not detract from Mr. Steane's qualities of field observation and documentary research. These are combined to make **The Northamptonshire Landscape** both an invaluable guide for the inquisitive layman and a useful starting point for the specialist historian or geographer who seeks to know the English Midlands through the life of one of its shires.

B. E. Little

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G. R. Stevenson who lives in Steeple Barton, is Senior Lecturer at the Lady Spencer-Churchill College of Education at Wheatley. His interest in local history arises largely from his work, especially in-service visits to village schools, and also from an adult education course that he ran on Lincolnshire villages in the 19th Century for Sheffield University Extramural Department.

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BLOXHAM PAGEANT

A week of village festivities and a pageant based on the history of Bloxham from Saxon times to the present day have been arranged for the week 4th-11th May 1975. The festival opens on Rogation Sunday, 4th May with a farm service. The pageant will be performed in the Parish Church from Wednesday 7th through to Sunday 11th May. There will also be an historical display in the Milcombe Chapel of the Parish Church, and on the weekend 10th-11th May Bloxham will be open to the public. Various other sporting and cultural activities are planned.

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