

# CAKE & COCKHORSE

THE

## HISTORY OF BANBURY:

INCLUDING

COPIOUS HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN NOTICES

OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

BY ALFRED BEESLEY,

MEMBER OF THE CAMDEN SOCIETY, AND MEMBER OF THE SHAKESPEARE SOCIETY

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publications can be found on the inside back cover

**Our cover illustration** shows the title page of Beesley's History of Banbury.

# CAKE & COCKHORSE

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## WE DO HONOUR TO ALFRED BEESLEY

In 1841, 140 years ago, Beesley published his History of Banbury. Despite Potts and other perhaps more readable writers, Beesley's remains the definitive history of Banbury, a mine of facts and personalities in the tradition of the great county histories.

Though, as Barbara Adkins has shown, the Beesleys came to Banbury from Warwickshire, Alfred and his family were true Banburians, living and trading at the heart of the throbbing life of the town, before tarmac roads or clattering railways, when the mooing and bleating of the four-footed outnumbered and re-echoed on market days the bucolic belches of their owners celebrating in the dozens of pubs.

Local history has been an ancient addiction. But few if any towns have enjoyed the detailed attention devoted to Banbury by Beesley. In 1841 county histories already abounded. Starting in the 16th century with relatively superficial and understandably inaccurate books such as Lambarde's History of Kent, antiquarians and historians broke through the earlier obscurantism, relying as it did on fable and gossip. Camden with his Britannia, published in 1586, set a new standard while his contemporary John Stow devoted his life to the collection of original documents.

In the 17th century began a long line of meticulously researched county histories, based where possible on original records to which references were given. The first such historian and the innovator was the incredible William Dugdale (1605-1686), garter King-of-arms, whose Monasticon Anglicanum, Antiquities of Warwickshire, Baronage of England and other publications were in style and format replicated by others for many of the counties of England - Hasted's Kent, Morant's Essex, Nichols' Leicestershire (he also pioneered the editing of local history periodicals with his Bibliotheca Topographica published in ten volumes

between 1780 and 1800), Manning and Bray's Surrey, Clutterbuck's Hertfordshire, Lipscomb's Buckinghamshire, Baker's Northamptonshire, to name some of the precedents on which Beesley could draw. In his preface he specifically acknowledges his debt to George Baker of Northampton "who will, I trust, permit me to say, that it was in a great measure by the perusal of his invaluable History of Northamptonshire that I was led, as an humble follower, and at a vast distance, to attempt, in the inadequate manner I have done, the compilation of the History of Banbury." John Steane, in his excellent article, lists other precedents.

To those of us who occupy otherwise idle hours with historical research, it amazes how those early writers obtained their information. Records were ill-indexed if at all. They were scattered. There were few transcriptions and printings as were later so copiously put in hand by the Harleian and other societies which burgeoned under Queen Victoria. There were no indexed calendars of state papers. The records of heralds' visitations were still hidden in (to most people) illegible manuscripts. There were no penny-post, telephones, telegraphs, or photo copying; train travel was only just beginning. No doubt Beesley, though a bachelor, did not have to cook for himself, nor to garden; so he had time. How often did he ride or travel by coach to London to examine public records? He certainly collected original documents. He certainly, as John Steane has shown, corresponded widely; it is a pity that only one end of that correspondence survives.

Some people complain that Beesley was inaccurate. So was Dugdale; so was Hasted. But the overwhelming judgement on him, as on the others, is to stare in wonder at his accuracy. We all welcome the standardised format and well-researched content of the Victoria County Histories, and wish that they could be more quickly completed. We admire and use the Dictionary of National Biography, the Complete Peerage, Wedgwood's contribution to the biographies of members of parliament, the biographical lists of the members of schools and universities, all prepared with access to indexed printed sources. But try doing detailed research into a single narrow subject, or into the life of a single person; you will find the VCH, the DNB, the Complete Peerage, all of them, spattered with inaccuracies; and how dull they are compared with the human comment and anecdote of the early histories.

One does not blame them; accuracy is difficult and takes much time; new sources are continually emerging from the mists of the past. One just stands back and is dumbfounded by the achievement of men such as Alfred Beesley who wrote so long ago.

## ALFRED BEESLEY'S HISTORY OF BANBURY. A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

### 1. Introduction

The materials for a study of Alfred Beesley, the historian of Banbury, are of three main kinds. Firstly there are printed reviews of his book and obituary notices to be found in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1841 and 1847. Secondly there are a series of 346 letters to Alfred Beesley, preserved in the Bodleian Library Oxford (MSS Top Oxon d 108-111). During the compilation of the material for the book, Alfred Beesley wrote to many other historians and antiquaries for help and these letters are the replies. The correspondence also deals with problems arising out of the subscriptions and the publication of the work in parts. The collection, which is bound in four volumes, is invaluable in tracing many of the sources of his information. Thirdly there are the series of seventeen volumes in Banbury Public Library, with an inscription, dated October 1844 and signed AB, stating that they are intended to contain all the corrections and additions which the author might have the opportunity to make. The "Banbury version" does in fact contain a great deal of new material and is particularly valuable in that it contains many original illustrations of buildings commissioned by Beesley and otherwise unpublished.

### 2. Alfred Beesley's Life

Alfred Beesley was born in 1800, the son of parents belonging to the Society of Friends. He was educated in Banbury, probably at the Academy, and was apprenticed to a watchmaker at Deddington, but served only part of his time. He never lost his skill or interest in mechanical things : he played and repaired organs and was a good astronomer, possessing a collection of valuable instruments. He was also an enthusiastic botanist and in his earlier life spent days and weeks in the collection of specimens. His brother Thomas Beesley also wrote about Botany and Geology and contributed to the History of Banbury. Although Alfred acted as an insurance agent in later life we are told (by the obituary writer in the Gentleman's Magazine) that "placed in easy pecuniary circumstances he was enabled to follow the bent of his inclinations". Subsequently these involved literary pursuits and he devoted many years to the collection of materials for his History of Banbury.

He was interested in politics in the middle of his life and was a warm advocate of the parliamentary Reform Bill of 1832. Later on, however, he espoused the cause of the Conservatives, but towards the end of his life he ceased to take any active part in politics. His family were prominent in local affairs. In the 1840s there were Beesleys who held one of the two town clerkships, the clerkship of the Magistrates, Overseer of the Poor, Secretary of the Bible Society and Correspondent of the anti-slavery society. Alfred Beesley never married<sup>1</sup> and lived with his aunt in Cornhill at a chemist's shop on the Market Place corner, next door to

Rushers. He fell seriously ill in 1845 and we are told that his failing strength enabled him at last to do little more than reach his garden, which appeared to be the sole object in which he took any interest. His death was nevertheless somewhat sudden because he was walking in the streets within about 48 hours of his decease.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. The Sources of the History

It seems that early on Alfred Beesley read, and was inspired by, George Baker's History of Northamptonshire which emerged in parts between 1822 and 1841 but eventually languished from lack of subscribers. "It was ... by the perusal of his invaluable History of Northamptonshire ... I was led, as a humble follower, and at a vast distance to attempt, in the inadequate manner I have done, the compilation of a History of Banbury". He was on good terms with Baker who wrote from Northampton on 20 May 1840, sending a hamper with some urns and coins, also "the lion" and knife from Thenford and three Banbury tokens for an exhibition in Banbury which Beesley was arranging.

On 18 August 1840 Baker again wrote thanking him for returning the exhibits and also for a packet of Banbury cakes "which are excellent and quite a treat". It was probably from Baker that Beesley derived the idea of publishing his history in parts. Also he owes to Baker the high standard set by the Northamptonshire historian in the extensive collection and critical use of documentary sources.

Two other county historians were sources of inspiration to Beesley. \* The learned White Kennett in 1695 had published "Parochial antiquities attempted in the history of Ambrosden, Burcester and other adjacent parts in the counties of Oxford and Bucks". An older contemporary of Beesley, John Dunkin, had published his History and Antiquities of Bicester in 1816 and collected materials with the aim of writing a county history. The History and Antiquities of the Hundreds of Bullingdon and Ploughley came out in 1823. Dunkin wrote to Beesley on 2 Feb 1840 stating that he thought he would never complete and publish his projected work but offered to allow Beesley to consult his MS Collections for Banbury and Neighbourhood. "I have nearly 20 volumes of collections for Oxfordshire. It has been my hobby for many years". Here then were the sources of inspiration for the History of Banbury.

Beesley himself acknowledged "numerous antiquarian, literary and local friends whose cheering assistance and encouragement and kind approval of my exertions" helped him towards the publication of his work.

Among these was J.H. Parker, secretary to the Oxford Society for promoting the study of Gothic Architecture. Parker wrote on July 25 1840 that he had been writing notes on churches; "if you find my notes too long you must cut them down ... it would be difficult to find another district

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\* This point is made by the reviewer in **Gentleman's Magazine** XV, 1841 65-8.

which presents so many fine and interesting churches". Practically the whole of the section devoted to descriptions of churches in the Banbury region (pp.108-145) was in fact written by J. H. Parker. His notes are at times supplemented by J. C. Stafford, Fellow of Magdalen, another of Beesley's Oxford contacts\*, and a Mr. Derick also contributed to some extent.

We must remember that Beesley was trying to compile his history from documentary sources which at this time were imperfectly sorted, rarely catalogued, never calendared, and often difficult of public access. He had to rely on personal contacts. We find him writing to the Lincoln Registry Office for documents relating to the bishopric while it was at Dorchester but he drew a blank (16 February 1839). Charles Brown wrote from the Augmentation Office, London, explaining that searches among the records could be made gratis but that copies would cost money. In the meantime he sent Beesley a list of chantry, college and guild documents (February 1839). Beesley also corresponded with learned aristocrats such as Lord Bute, who offered him the use of his library at Luton which "is very rich in topography and the history of the Civil Wars". The Marquis of Northampton regretted that he could not supply him with a picture of Banbury Castle (February 12, 1839). His other Oxford contacts included F.S. Thurland of New College who promised to try to get him a sight of some important MSS in Trinity College. He sent soil samples from Blacklands† to William Buckland, the eccentric Professor of Zoology in the University who replied that they stimulated his imagination without satisfying his curiosity! Buckland in return provided Beesley with a glass bead which he had bought from a woman who dealt in lace and lived at Adderbury. "No doubt", he says in his letter of 25 June 1840 "it had belonged to some of your Britons living at Tadmarton".

This traffic in antiquities reminds us that archaeology as a science had not yet been born. Fellow antiquaries were busy filling their cabinets with collections of celts, urns and coins or indulging in wild speculations about the interpretation of field monuments. I. M. Severn wrote to Beesley on Aug 12 1843 "I feel particularly obliged to you for your kind offer of resigning to me that portion of the Marston remains you have in your possession . . . I shall be happy to show you at any time whatever I may have added to the collection since you were last here. I will do my best to obtain the brass bits etc. which Mrs. Bernard has at Thorpe but I much fear she is too fond of her prize to be willing to relinquish it". Sir Henry Dryden, the enthusiastic Northamptonshire antiquary from Canons Ashby, who illustrated many objects for Beesley, wrote (MS Top Oxon d 108, 64) "I

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\* In a letter dated 11 Nov 1840 Stafford adds detail on the description of Aston-le-Walls church (MS Top Oxon d 110 p 7).

† Blacklands is a field name between Tadmarton and Swalcliffe. Here was a large Romano-British site.

heard a few days ago of a discovery at Souldern and on Monday rode over there. I saw the place, got the information necessary and got some pieces of brass ... a carving and part of a good Roman British urn. They told me that Richard Owen, fishmonger of Banbury, had got some brass thing. I want you to ask about this thing and get hold of it if you can". Beesley himself was a collector, specialising in Banbury trade tokens, but Thomas Symonds wrote from Eynsham vicarage (Dec 13 1842) criticizing him for not writing more fully on these. He could have shown him his own extensive collection had he taken the trouble of coming over to Eynsham Vicarage ... He was in constant contact throughout 1840 with E. Pretty who showed a lively interest, not always backed up by systematic fieldwork, in the Portway and other British Roman roads. Beesley also made use of his brother's scientific skills. Thomas Beesley (p. 500) furnished him with an analysis of the water at Astrop Wells and also wrote a sketch on "The Botany of the neighbourhood of Banbury with a sketch of the Geology (pp. 571-599). In short Alfred Beesley was indefatigable in collecting his material. We will now turn to the way in which he shaped the raw facts and turned them into history.

#### 4. The History of Banbury, Including Copious Historical and Antiquarian Notices of the Neighbourhood

Alfred Beesley's book appeared in parts, was printed in Banbury by William Potts, and was published in London by Nichols and Son in 1841. Beesley starts off by discussing the place name 'Banbury' which he considered meant "manslaughter" or place of a battle. The Victoria County History (X, 6), however interprets it as a personal name attached to the Old English burh meaning a fortified place. His survey of prehistoric and Roman antiquities is full, and accompanied by a series of maps and plans of encampments, which are particularly valuable in that quite often the monuments he describes have been gravely damaged by agriculture in the succeeding 150 years. He points out that at Madmarston "the ground has been for many years under the plough and the earthworks are now much less conspicuous than they were within memory : the valla having been lowered several feet and the depths of the fosses proportionally decreased". These processes have gone on and this great Iron Age fort has now been virtually erased from the landscape. His contributor, E. Pretty, fell into the trap, common among antiquaries of his time, in attempting to force British and Roman field monuments into a grand system. This involved interpreting tumuli and other high spots as "speculi" or sighting posts and covering maps with lines of intervisibility. Beesley by implication, rejects some of the more extreme of these claims, because he leaves them out of the History. He nevertheless commits the cardinal error of attributing to the druids both the Rollright Stones and the Hoarstone at Enstone. He shows an intelligent understanding of the large Romano British urban site at Swalcliffe (pp. 17-20) and reasonably reckoned that the Blackland "arose from immense quantities of forage and litter rather than burning". There are



valuable descriptions of Roman buildings at Beaconsfield Farm which are cited in the Victoria County History (X, 310-11) but he goes badly wrong in misinterpreting a bear baiting pit as a "Castrensis amphitheatre" (p 25).

The medieval sections include an extensive extract from Domesday Book which is quoted but not discussed. He mentions the foundation of the Castle and illustrates it with a plan of 1685. A useful series of documents relating to the history of the castle are referred to (pp.88-91). He recognised that the bridge dated from the 13th century and illustrated it with a fine engraving (plate 18). It is still there encased in brick and iron girders. Much work has been done on the topographical side of medieval town planning since Beesley's time : it is perhaps unfair to point out that he does not make use of the Hundred Rolls and there is no mention of the planned extension of the borough in the mid 13th century (Victoria County History X, 20). We have noticed already that he leans heavily on Parker for his church descriptions. The section devoted to Banbury Old Church is particularly valuable, because it had been completely destroyed in the 1780s much to the fury of the addicts of Gothic architecture. Here the description is by P. Jewitt of Headington. Beesley prints Anthony à Wood's list of arms displayed in the windows of the old church (pp.15-6) and recites the entertaining story of the iconoclast, Mr. Sharp, who met a Roman Catholic in prison. Mr. Sharp on being asked why he was in prison answered "for throwing down the images in Banbury Church". "O", says the Papist "what a hodg-podg is your Religion. We are put in for setting them up, and you are put in for pulling of them down". The demolition of the church is dealt with later on in the book (pp. 537-8). It gets short shrift. Again Beesley quotes Parker with relish. "The new church of Banbury is altogether the most despicable building that bears the honoured name of a church in this or any other country : it is a hideous mass of stone without form or proportion, or a single redeeming feature : its interior would make a handsome playhouse. Thousands of pounds have been squandered in ornamenting this building. Such a building might have been well enough adopted for the exhibitions of gladiators or of wild beasts in ancient Rome but is totally unfit for a Christian church, and so long as it stands, it will be a perpetual shame and disgrace to the town which allowed their old church to be destroyed".

Beesley when discussing the antiquity of Banbury Cross, reckons that the nursery rhymes "have been taught to every English child perhaps from Leland's time to the present". The Victoria County History disagrees and dates the first publication of "Ride a Cock Horse" to the 18th century. It is not as old a rhyme as Beesley thought.

At intervals throughout the history Beesley devotes sections to prominent families; towards the end of the passage on the late middle ages there is a long description of the Edgcote campaign. Then follow bibliographical notices on the Danvers family of Calthorpe and the Copes of Hanwell. One of his more vigorous correspondents, W.H. Cope, provided him with

information about his family in a letter dated 18 April, 1840, mentioning the Elizabethan MP who ended up in the Tower but survived to entertain James I, at Hanwell. Beesley uses much of this material on pages 239-240.

When he comes to the Reformation he prints very usefully the portions of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* which refer to Banbury (pp. 197-202). Again he realises the importance of the documentary record when he transcribed the records relating to the Chantry of the Blessed Mary at Banbury (pp. 211-214).

Although the history is disappointing on the whole in its topographical treatment of medieval Banbury Beesley makes up for this to some extent by a full description of the town previous to the fire of 1628 (pp. 273-277). This account is derived from inquisitions, title deeds, Leland's account and his own observations on the ground. He remarks sadly "scarcely a fragment of the buildings which existed in Banbury when Leland wrote can now be traced". There is of course even less now than when Beesley wrote. He probably errs when he assigns a number of old houses to the reign of James I "their pointed gables and enriched verge (sic) boards pierced in every variety of pattern, their finials and pendants and pargetted fronts, give an air of the picturesque". In fact the Victoria County History considers that "the great rebuilding" did not get going in Banbury until after 1650. The study of later medieval and 16th-17th century vernacular building had of course hardly begun in Beesley's time. Intensive survey, especially of the roof timbers, is still required before we can be certain that we understand these buildings.

He has little to say about the markets, fairs, trade, industry or farming matters which of course the Victoria County History rightly expounds in an ample way to our age dominated as it is by economic considerations.

Probably the most valuable part of the history, and the section least likely to be superseded, is Banbury in the Civil War. Here Beesley tends to use narrative sources rather than the State Papers which were as yet uncalendared, but the detail (pp. 291-454) is impressive and the fact that in his annotated version he does not see fit to revise his account suggests that he was in the main satisfied with what he had written.

Some of this detail was obtained from Beesley's own rich collection of rare pamphlets; he consulted others in the British Museum. He made very good use of a suggestion made by Thomas Rodd in a letter dated December 20, 1840. Rodd explained that he had sold the MS Correspondence of Sir Samuel Luke to the British Museum. Luke had been commander of Newport Pagnell during the Civil War and there were many references to Banbury which Beesley quoted extensively. His grasp of the minutiae of the war is extraordinary. Two examples may be given. In his correspondence he was advised about the calibre of the cannon; nothing was lost, the technical detail appears in a footnote (p 369). Again the footnote on p. 417 (No 43) records the interesting fact that there were still

people in Beesley's time who could remember the location of the surviving siegeworks.

Beesley does not allow his political predilections to distort his view of the war; his moderate royalist views are evident but not obtrusive. Only on page 435 does his guard slip and he refers to "the foul murder (of the king) that was about to be perpetrated". He sums up the malign effects of the war on the town by quoting the vivid comment "once a great and faire market towne before the late troubles but now having scarce the one halfe standing to gaze on the ruines of the other".

He gives an impartial and full treatment of the remarkable Puritan tradition which Banbury became famed for. The historian, Camden, had apparently been responsible for a famous aphorism referring to Banbury. According to Beesley he went to the printing office at the time that the sheet respecting Banbury was going to the press. He found that to his own observation that the town was famous for cheese, the translator had added "cakes and ale". He changed the latter word to "zeal" to the great indignation of the Puritans who abounded in that town! Detailed biographical notices of the leading Puritan divines follow. He mentions Samuel Wells, whose preaching was so riveting "the ears of his auditors were chained to his lips".

Beesley's text, while thorough and full of detail, is rarely dull, he clearly enjoyed the macabre humour of the epitaph of Richard Richards "who by a gangrene first lost a toe, afterwards a leg, and lastly his life on the 7th day of April 1636:

"Ah cruel Death, to make 3 meals of one!  
To taste, and eat, and eat till all was gone,  
But know, thou tyrant! When the Trump shall call,  
He'el find his feet and stand when thou shalt fall". (p. 497).

He also has an eye for the eccentric. In 1816 Thomas Colley, a baker, residing in Bridge Street, undertook for a wager to walk 1020 miles in 20 successive days. He accomplished the task "and died not long after from the effects of his exertions".

When Beesley turns to the 18th century I feel that the History of Banbury begins to falter. There is not the same broad grasp of issues which is so noteworthy a feature of his treatment of earlier periods. The history becomes piecemeal, a collection of events and topics, but there is nothing significant said about the economic or social life in Banbury during the 18th century. He cites an interesting list of inns together with the earlier dates at which they are mentioned. What is most unusual for Beesley is that he states the list "is made from a great variety of records" which he fails to specify. He deals with disparate and sometimes trivial topics such as the murder of Widow Wilde and smallpox epidemics, the Culworth Gang and an account of a fight between two celebrated pugilists, Johnson and Perricks, but in general the account lacks body. The schools only get a footnote (p. 542).

There is an improvement in his account of the last forty years 1800-1841. The Municipal Corporation Act commission is published when apparently there was only one street keeper by day and four watchmen in summer and six in winter by night (p. 546). There were 38 public houses and 5 beer shops. It seems that the town was long proverbial alike for its trade and its dirt. "Within the present century, there were cart ruts traversing all the principal streets more than nine inches deep and in wet weather floating masses of mud covered the whole surface (p. 553). We also hear the intriguing fact that "the fair at Michaelmas derived some importance from being one, at which, according to the custom of the neighbourhood, male and female servants attend for the purpose of being hired . . . Young people . . . meet to be hired as servants, which meeting at Banbury they called the Mop, at Bloxham the Statute, where they all sort themselves and carry their badges according as they are qualified : the carters standing in one place with their whips : and the shepherds in another with their crooks". He ends by quoting some interesting details about the manufacture of local specialities such as plush, girth and other webbing (p. 566). Banbury cheese apparently was "a very rich kind of cheese, almost white, about an inch in thickness, and resembles in appearance the soft cream cheese which is made in many parts but it is of far more delicious taste and bears the high price of 1s 6d per pound when new or about 1s 9d when ripe"\* . A fascinating detail about Banbury cakes is relegated, as so often in Beesley, to a footnote. Betty White, the maker of Banbury cakes, is speaking. "Only think " she used to say, when customers remarked that the cakes were smaller "there's currans, they be double the price th'used to be and then there's butter an' sugar, why they be double the price th'was formerly". On customers complaining of the size of the halfpenny cakes she would say "G--help y' I wonder how much butter and sugar y' could buy for a h'a'penny" (p. 570). The final note is about the cultivation of rhubarb in the locality, which reminds us that, in the correspondence, T.W. Lancaster of Magdalen College, had written on Nov 18, 1840 asking Beesley to send some information, specimens of the seed, and roots, of the varieties cultivated to Dr. Daubeny of the Botanic Garden, Oxford, to be sent on to the Professor of Botany Cambridge. This last point emphasises that Beesley was recognised as an authority in his field by the well known academics of his day. His history brought him well deserved fame which unfortunately he did not live long enough to enjoy.

### 5. The Illustrations

The History of Banbury was well illustrated by plans and engravings which were gathered together in 26 plates at the back of the book. Many of these were the work of the artist, A. Jewitt of Headington, and it

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\* Shakespeare (*Merry Wives of Windsor* 1.1.130) refers to Shallow as "a Banbury Cheese". This may refer to another type of cheese or simply a paradoxical joke at the expense of Shallow!

is clear that he took much trouble in his commissions. J.H. Parker evidently has recommended him to Beesley "His charges cannot be less than 30s a day" but warned Beesley that Jewitt was such an enthusiast "that as you will have to pay for his time, I think it only right to give you this hint that you may remember his business at Banbury will be to sketch or he will employ more time in seeing and in going from sight (sic) to sight than in sketching . . . he has no less than sixteen persons dependant upon him and cannot afford to give away an hour" (June 21, 1839).

When we look at the quality of such an engraving as the pargetted buildings which was used on the prospectus sheet (plate XXIII), or the pictures of the old parish church (plate XIV), it is clear that Jewitt was capable of doing a good job. He certainly took pains. He wrote on February 29 1840 saying "Broughton Moat will make a beautiful thing and I shall as you request keep the light and shade the same as the original th' I think if some of the bright lights are not taken down a little it will look showy". Beesley flirted with the idea of switching to Mr. Delamotte, the Oxford artist, but Parker informed him that in his opinion his prices were inflated. When he was preparing the annotated and revised version (the 17 volumes in Banbury library) he employed George Clarke of Scaldwell and this series of monochrome water colours is a valuable record of many buildings in the south of Northamptonshire and the Banbury region in the 1840s.

Sir Henry Dryden wrote to Beesley a curiously backhanded compliment when the history was published.

"It is very nicely printed and better than people would expect in a country town. Your tailpiece "FINIS" is not the least tasty part of it".

John M. Steane  
Oxfordshire County Museum  
Woodstock

## References

1. Thomas Symonds wrote to him, Oct 17, 1838 (MS Top Oxon d 109). "My friend Kirtland informs me that you are a Bachelor and have no one to consult but your own inclination . . . put a clean shirt in your pocket and a pair of stockings and come over to Oxford by the coach and you will find readily by some of the Cheltenham coaches a conveyance to Eynsham where I shall be most happy to receive you . . . I have undoubtedly the best collection of Oxfordshire tradesmans tokens. I once fell in with an exceedingly large collection".
2. For his life see the Gentleman's Magazine XXVIII, 1847, 99. Also notes of a lecture given by Mr. Brinkworth on Alfred Beesley.

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The Original Cake Shop, Parsons St as it was in the early 19th century and where Samuel Beesley made the Banbury Cakes 1818-1843.

## THE BEESLEY FAMILY OF ALCESTER AND BANBURY

The ancestors of Alfred Beesley, whose 'History of Banbury' was published in 1841, and his brothers can be traced back to a John Beesley born at Alcester, Warwickshire in 1643. These Beesleys were Quakers and their births, marriages and burials were entered in the Monthly Meeting of the Quaker Meeting Digest and were well documented. Also an unknown member of the Beesley family made a record of 26 pages in a booklet up to the death of Mary Beesley of Banbury in 1831. It commences 'A Register of the Family of Beesley of Alcester in the County of Warwick from the year 1643'; it gives the dates by the old months which Quakers continued to use after the calendar was altered in 1751 and the year began on 1st January, instead of 25th March.

### THE ALCESTER BEESLEY FAMILY

John Beesley of Alcester and his second wife had two sons, Thomas born in 1646 and Edward born in 1652. It was through this Thomas I and his second wife Martha Lucas that the Banbury Beesleys were descended. Thomas I died in 1714 and in his Will he was described as a chandler of Alcester. His son Thomas II was born there on 12th August 1683. "About the age of 30 he became a minister. His ministry was not large but sound and Edifying. He was a diligent attender of meetings for worship and discipline and much concerned for the support of his own meeting. He also 'kept a steady eye to the business of the day.' He married 19 ii (April) 1719 at Tewkesbury, Glos. Sarah, d. of William and Sarah Hawkins of Tewkesbury. He died at his house at Alcester on 1 Feb 1770 and was interred at Friends Burying Ground there." - Testimony of Evesham M.M. in TCMD vol.2, p.358.

Thomas II (1683-1770) and his wife Sarah had 13 children viz: William, Thomas III, Samuel, Sarah, Benjamin, Hannah, Henry, John, Joseph, Martha, Elizabeth, Mary and James - born between 1720 and 1741 (several dying in infancy). Only two of their 8 sons had any issue. The eldest son, William died in 1743 at Uxbridge on a journey to London. Two other sons, Henry and Joseph were glovers at Worcester; two daughters also lived there. These were all buried in Sansom Fields Friends Burying Ground at Worcester. Several descendants of Henry were buried there, also a number of other Beesleys.

The Beesley's lived at the "Upper End of the Butter St., over against the Town Hall: Alcester." (Thomas Beesley's Will).

Thomas III, the second son of Thomas II, came to Banbury and was an ironmonger. It is not known why the family left Alcester or why Thomas III did not go to Worcester with his brothers and sisters. The Victoria County History of Warwickshire Vol.3, p.20 under Alcester states:- "The Friends Meeting House was founded in 1660 but subject to persecution and never very flourishing. It stands in one of the courts in High St. In 1835 it was converted into a private house."

Thomas II remained in Alcester and died there on 1st February 1770 and was buried in the Friends Burying Ground. According to his Will he was a prosperous ironmonger and owned property in Alcester and in The Shambles at Worcester.

#### THE BEESLEYS OF BANBURY

Thomas Beesley III (1721-1776) was, as stated above, the first generation to live in Banbury. He was born at Alcester on 26th January 1721. He married Elizabeth, d. of John and Sarah Booth of Nottingham, at a Public Meeting of Friends there on 26th of 3rd month 1762. They went to live in Banbury the same year. Thomas had an ironmongery business here, possibly at No.5 High St where his grandson later had a chemist shop. (In Elizabeth Beesley's Will made in 1788 she leaves her son Thomas "my freehold messuage in Red Lion St, Banbury" - now lower part of High St.).

Thomas III and Elizabeth had one son Thomas IV, also three daughters, Sarah, Elizabeth and Mary, who were living in Mansfield, Notts in 1798. They were mentioned as living there in the will of their Uncle Joseph Beesley of Worcester made in that year.

Thomas III was only 55 when he died in 1776. In his will he left his brothers Henry and Joseph Beesley of Worcester guardians of his children with his wife Elizabeth.

He was buried in the Friends Burial Ground Banbury and he had "resided in Banbury for 15 years." (Family Records). His widow Elizabeth died in 1791.

The Victoria County History of Oxfordshire Vol.10 p.111 under Quakers states:- The Beesley family of Banbury was prominent in the movement at least from 1775 when Elizabeth Beesley was overseer of the Womens Quarterly Meeting.

Thomas Beesley IV (1763-1802) was the only son of the above. He was born at Banbury on the 28th of the 2nd month (April) 1763. He married at Alcester on the 30th December 1791, Mary, daughter of Joseph Foord of Rudgeway, Worcestershire. The family booklet states that she was born at Tadmarton. Very little is known about this Thomas IV, except that he was a druggist in Banbury. He was only 39 when he died and he did not leave a will. He and Mary had four sons, Joseph, Henry, Samuel and Alfred and their lives are fairly well documented. Their births were entered in the Society of Friends Banbury Monthly Meeting Digest and are recorded in the printed Records Volume 16 of the Banbury Historical Society, Baptism Register 1723-1812. In this Thomas IV is described as a druggist.

His widow Mary Beesley died at Banbury in 1831.

#### CHILDREN OF THOMAS AND MARY BEESLEY

Joseph born on 3rd December 1793; Henry born on 6th December 1794; Samuel born on 12th October 1796 and Alfred born on 17th April 1799. JOSEPH (1793-1827). He married by licence at St. Mary's Church, Banbury on 25th March 1816, Elizabeth, daughter of William Loftus, grocer of



Banbury. Joseph was described as an attorney's clerk. Later he became a druggist and lived in Cornhill, Banbury. Joseph and Elizabeth had a son Thomas V and daughter Mary Ann, who was unmarried, died on 4th August 1878 and was buried in Banbury cemetery. Joseph died at the early age of 33; his widow continued to keep the chemist shop in Cornhill until 1875 when she and Mary went to live at 31 West Bar (My Life). She died on 11th June 1886, aged 87 years.

THOMAS V (1818-1892). Their only son was born on 28th March 1818. He married at St. Mary's Church on 30th August 1844, Sarah, daughter of John Golby Rusher, who lived next door to the Beesleys in Cornhill. It was his wife Sarah who kept a diary which was privately printed later by her as 'My Life'. It contains many details of the Beesley and Rusher families as well as events which took place in and around Banbury from about 1829-1892 - see extracts at the end of this account.

For a short time Thomas had a chemist and druggist business in Chipping Norton, but in 1846 he returned to Banbury to take over his Uncle Henry Beesley's chemist shop at 5 High St. This is now the Royal Insurance Co. and was formerly Goodman's the chemists, being taken over by Mr. Goodman in 1889.

Thomas owned the property in Parsons St., known as 'the Original Cake Shop'. In 1888 he sold this to Mr. Brown who had been in business there since 1872.

As well as being a chemist Thomas was a noted meteorologist. He retired from the chemist shop in March 1887 after 41 years and the family went to live at his mother's old home at 31 West Bar. He died there in 1892.

Thomas and Sarah had 7 children; of their 3 sons, only one, Thomas VI, survived infancy; 3 daughters, Sarah, Elizabeth (Bessie), and Edith, survived, but were unmarried and lived at home. Their son Thomas VI was educated at Magdalen College School, Brackley; in 1868 he passed his pharmaceutical examination in London and went as an assistant chemist in Notting Hill in 1873. The same year he started his own business in Salisbury and on 9th October that year he married there Mattie Spinney. On 11th October 1874 their son Henry Alfred was born. Later the family moved back to London. In 1882 they were living in Brixton and in 1883 they were at Clapham. In 1887 the son was at Westminster School and went daily to the service at the Abbey and was confirmed in the Henry VII Chapel. It would appear that this Henry Alfred (Harry) was the last descendant of Thomas Beesley III who had settled in Banbury in 1762. Nothing more is known of him or any descendants he may have had.

2. HENRY (1794-1869). He was a member of the Society of Friends all his life. He married Hannah daughter of John and Ann Adkins of Calthorpe, Banbury, on the eighth day of the tenth month (December) 1823 at the Friends Meeting House, Banbury. They 'took each other in



HENRY BEESLEY  
1794-1869  
druggist of 5 High St.

marriage in the presence of Samuel Beesley.' Henry was a druggist of 5 High St. and behind the shop he had a warehouse in Pepper Alley. He retired in 1846 and, as stated under Joseph, he handed the business over to his nephew Thomas. He then went to live at Adderbury. In 1865 he returned to Banbury and resided at his house in the Horsefair next to the Friends Meeting House where he died on 26th January 1869, aged 74 years. He was buried in the Friends Burial Grounds at Adderbury (My Life).

3. SAMUEL (1796-1843). He married twice but had no issue. His first wife was Ann Fardon of Tredington whom he married at a Quaker Service at Shipston-on-Stour in 1820, but she died at Banbury in 1829 aged 30. His second wife was his second cousin Deborah West (1803-1887), whom he married in 1833. Samuel was a baker and took over the 'Original Cake Shop' in Parsons Lane (Parsons St) in 1818 from the Rutter family and made the famous Banbury Cakes - see article in C & CH Summer 1967 and 'A History of Banbury' by Wm. Potts 2nd edition p.161. He continued there until his death in 1843. The property belonged to his nephew Thomas Beesley (My Life). In 1872 the shop was taken over by Mrs. E.W. Brown, his niece by marriage, whose step-mother had been Hannah Rutter - see family tree. Samuel was a Friend and Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1831 (V.C.H.). He died on 20 November 1843, aged 47 of a disease contracted while visiting Banbury prison. Samuel started to visit the prisoners because he found there was no provision for their moral and religious instruction. He wrote an account of his visits. "He was a deeply christian man, but the view he held of himself was a humble one and when asked to become an elder he felt that he was not worthy of the office. He was careful to live in accordance with the principles he professed and was

often able to offer good counsel to those who had need of it. To Friends travelling in the ministry he was always sympathetic and helpful."

"He died at Banbury after a short illness on 20th November 1843, aged 47 years." (Quakers Digest of Oxon).

His widow Deborah Beesley died on 24th August 1887 aged 83 years at 7 Calthorpe Rd., and was buried in the Friends Burial Ground. (My Life).

4. ALFRED (1799-1847). He was the youngest son and the best known Beesley as the author of 'The History of Banbury' published by private subscription in 1841. He was unmarried and lived in Cornhill all his life, for the latter part with his sister-in-law Elizabeth Beesley and niece Mary Ann. The November 1962 issue of C & CH says "He was a man of many interests and occupations: insurance agent, organ builder, member of the Camden and Shakespeare Societies, historian; his poems show a similar width of interest and painstaking application. He was a member of the Quaker Meeting until he resigned in 1825 (V.C.H.). He died on 10th April 1847 and was buried in St. Mary's Churchyard, Banbury.

Barbara Adkins

#### SOURCES

1. Book of births, marriages and deaths of the Beesley family of Alcester and Banbury 1643-1831 written by an unknown member of the family. A copy of this and of family trees were kindly sent to me by Mr. David Brown of Hexham, Northumberland.
2. Birth, marriage and death Beesley records kept by the Society of Friends Quarterly and Monthly Meetings of the Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Oxfordshire Digests and other records in Berks and Oxon Q.M. Digest, kindly sent to me by the Society of Friends, Friends House Library, London.
3. P. C. C. Wills 1754-1772 at the Public Record Office, London.
4. Warwickshire Wills at the Hereford and Worcester Record Office, Worcester.
5. "MY LIFE" by Sarah Beesley (wife of Thomas Beesley of Banbury) 259 pages 1829-1892.
6. Baptism Register of Banbury 1723-1812 (BHS Vol.16) which includes Quaker Banbury Monthly Meeting Register of births. Marriage Register of Banbury 1724-1837 (BHS Vol.16).
7. Victoria County Histories of Warwickshire and Oxfordshire.
8. 'A History of Banbury' by William Potts.



**CORNHILL** drawn by John Austin an Oxford architect in 1857. The Beesley family's chemist shop, where Alfred Beesley the historian lived, is on the right. (Shoemaker's Window p. 93).

Table 1. DIRECT ANCESTORS OF THE BANBURY LINE

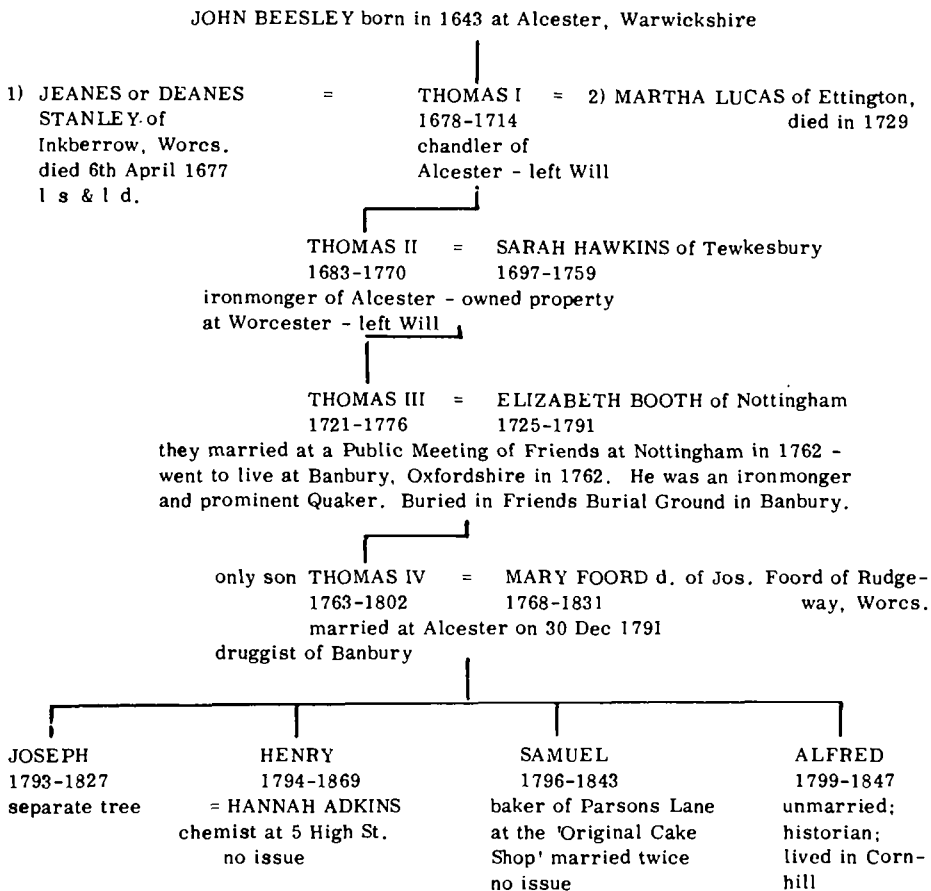


Table 2. DESCENDANTS OF JOSEPH BEESLEY OF BANBURY

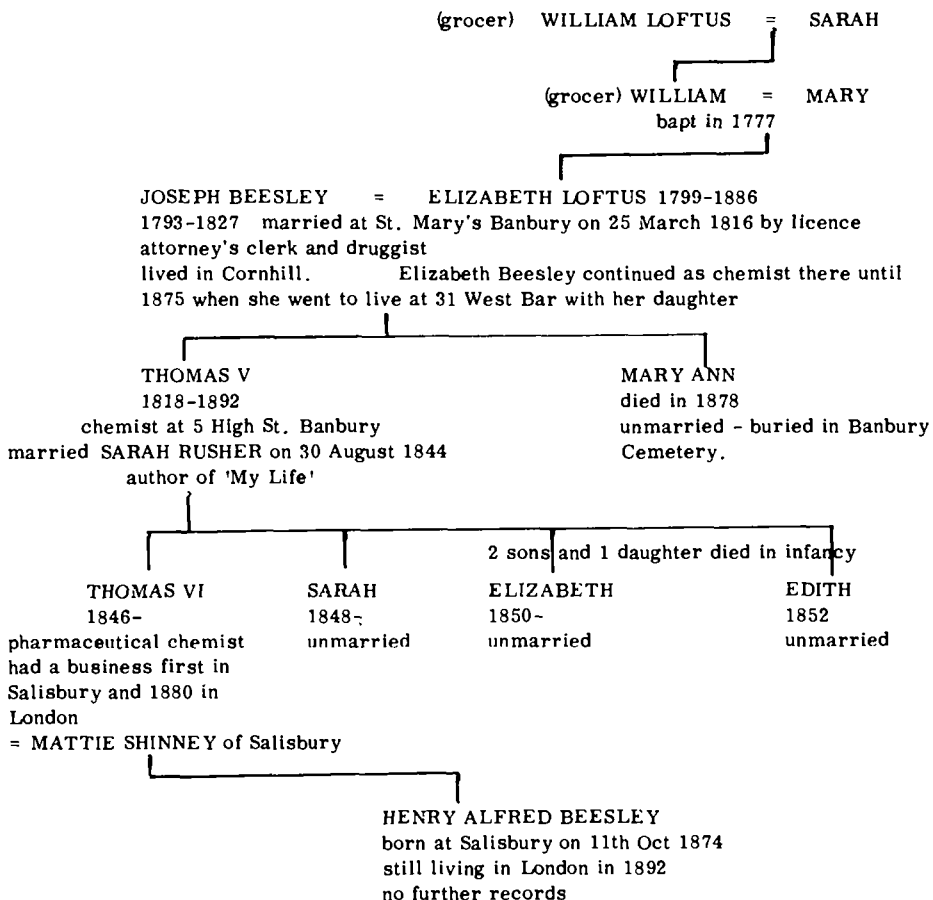
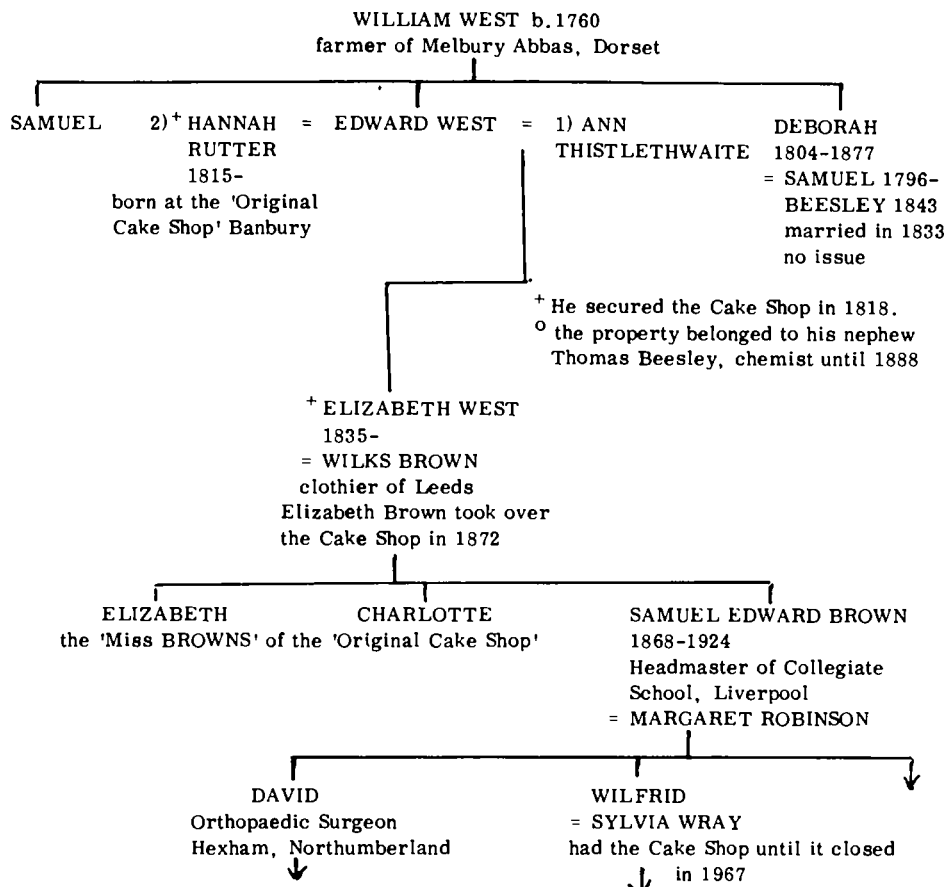


Table 3. TREE SHOWING CONNECTION WITH BEESLEY AND BROWN OF THE 'ORIGINAL CAKE SHOP'



+ p. 161 of "Potts 2nd Ed."  
o "My Life"

EXTRACTS from "MY LIFE" by SARAH BEESLEY, Printed by Private Circulation - 259 pages.

"Introduction . . . . . My husband (Thomas Beesley V) is a meteorologist of some note and he took observations at 5 High St. every morning for nearly 40 years and sent the particulars to the Banbury Guardian.

p.1 "I was born in Bridge St. Banbury on 10th March 1812 at which time I had a brother John. My father was John Golby Rusher, a letter-press, copper plate printer. . . . . His father Mr. William Rusher was a bookseller in the Market Place, where he lived when my father was born in 1785. My mother's maiden name was Sarah Wilkins from Eynsham. . . . .

p.5 My father died on 5th March 1877 aged 92 years.

p.29 (the first mention of Beesley)

1829 and again in 1838 Banbury Auxiliary Bible Society, Mr. H. Beesley Ladies Secretary Mrs. H. Beesley.

1841 Stamp Office and Legacies Return Office, Mr. Alfred Beesley, Cornhill.

1838 My brothers were both musical and occasionally Mr. Thomas Beesley who used to play the flute came to our house with them . . . . . He was the only son of our next door neighbour, Mrs. Beesley, a chemist and had one sister.

1844 On Feb. 2nd I went with Thomas Beesley to Chipping Norton to look at Mr. Simpkins house, who was a chemist and druggist and whose business he was thinking of buying.

On April 1st Thomas Beesley commenced business there.

On August 30th I was married to Thomas Beesley at St Mary's Church Banbury by Rev T. Mardon. . . . .

1845 July 15th My first baby was born.

On August 2nd we went to Banbury and spent some time with my husband's mother and sister next door, where Mr. Alfred Beesley also lived. He was very much attached to the dear baby and anxious to know if she should like an organ he had built in one of Mr. Henry Beesley's warehouses in Pepper Alley.

On Sept 5th Mr. Alfred Beesley was godfather to the baby.

1846 My first baby Mary, died of croup at Chipping Norton on April 3rd.

About the middle of this year Uncle Henry Beesley retired from his business at 5 High St. in favour of my husband and we went to live there. My son Thomas was born on Dec 13th.

1847 April 10 Uncle Alfred Beesley, author of "Beesley's History of Banbury," died at my husband's mother's house, in Cornhill and was buried in the churchyard in the vault with my dear little Mary.

1848 My daughter Sarah was born on Tuesday afternoon of June 20.

1849 This year my grandfather Mr. William Rusher died at Reading aged 90.

1850 My daughter Elizabeth was born on April 26th.

1851 My son Joseph was born on Dec 28th.



1852 My son Joseph died.

1850 The railway was opened between Oxford and Banbury on Sept. 2nd.

1851 Census Banbury 4035; Neithrop 4185; Warkworth and Grimsbury 573; Total 8793.

1852 My daughter Edith Mary was born on 25 Dec.

1854 My son Henry Alfred was born on June 18th.

My brother Janes (Rusher) was now in Practice as a Surgeon at Pershore (still living in 1891).

1856 My husband was unanimously elected Chairman of the Board of Health. He gave a Lecture on "Chemistry of Water."

1858 My dear little Henry Alfred died of diphtheria on June 20th and was buried at Banbury Cemetery.

On October 2nd my daughter Sarah and I went to visit Uncle and Aunt Davies at Overthorp House, Reading, and on the way we stayed at Uncle William Rusher's.

1860 In the summer of this year we took a house at Golden Villas, Neithrop.

1861 Total census of Banbury 10,238.

The Rev. H. Black our Vicar called to ask if we were willing to have our pew at the Church cut down. We consented unwillingly as many others did.

On June 28 Tom came home for his holidays from Brackley and brought with him first-class prize for Classics awarded by Magdalen College, Oxford.

1862 Uncle William Rusher, Surgeon of Oxford died on 24th March aged 70 and on 1st June my brother Joseph died, aged 32.

On 3rd May we moved to 21 Crouch St. until 23rd Sept.

Tom left school and went into his father's shop.

1866 I received a letter from my sister Harriett (Mrs. Harrison) whose home was at Melbourne, Australia. She had 3 children.

1867 Eclipse of the sun.

1868 My son Tom went to London and passed the first Pharmaceutical Examination in October.

1866 At the examination of the University of London my husband matriculated. On April 14th a fire was discovered at 2 shops in High St. occupied by Mrs. Vaughan, jeweller and Mr. Tearle, confectioner. All the contents were burnt. On October 1st Mr. Samuelson M. P. gave a dinner in the Town Hall and a ball in the Central Corn Exchange to celebrate the coming of age of his eldest son.

During the night of Nov 13th there was a remarkable display of shooting stars. It was said that 7000 were seen between midnight and 5.30 a.m. Many had long fiery tails and were exceedingly beautiful.

Sarah and I went to Bloxham Church on Nov 23rd to hear the Rev. Mr. Machonochie preach. This was the same gentleman against whom many actions were brought for Ritualistic Practices. He wore a white surplice with large sleeves and a hood lined with red. He did not kneel at all. The service was intoned and chanted.

On Nov 30th Edith and I went to the Great Western Railway Station to see the Queen who was on her way to Wolverhampton and was to wait at Banbury for five minutes. The Recorder read an address and the Mayor's daughter, Miss Harrison, presented her majesty with flowers and Banbury cakes. We saw the Queen who stood up as the train moved slowly out of the station. On Sunday Dec 23rd our vicar Rev. H. Black preached in a white surplice and some of the responses were sung and other alterations to the service at St. Mary's which we did not like.

1867 On Sunday May 19th Messrs T. Pain and J. Stockton, the new churchwardens, walked out of St. Mary's when offertory sentences were being read, to show their disapproval of the new church practices.

1868 There was talk of starting a Grammar School in Banbury and a Meeting was held.

On June 8th my husband walked to Bretch and while speaking to Mr. and Mrs. Hutchings in their conveyance a light pony trap came along driving very fast and knocked my husband down. One of the wheels went over both his legs and his left eye was cut. He managed to walk home but was rather badly bruised.

1869 Uncle Henry (Beesley) died on January 26th aged 74 years at his home adjoining the Friends Meeting House, Horsefair. Charles Gillett, William Walford and Richard Lamb were executors.

1872 July 17 was a fete day in Banbury, the occasion being the opening of the Horton Infirmary. The Bishop of Oxford was present and there was a concert and dancing and festivities.

A very remarkable whirlwind occurred at Newbottle on Nov 30th.

T. L. M. Cartwright sent an account to the Times.

1873. On Jan 17th Bessie and I accompanied my husband to the scene of the late whirlwind. The complete wreck was enough to make one tremble. About the end of June Tom went as assistant to Mr. Long at Notting Hill, London and very soon after he started business for himself at Salisbury and on Oct 9th he married Miss Mattie Spinney at St. Edmunds Church, Salisbury.

1874 I was made a grandma on Oct 11th by the birth of a grandson at Salisbury. He was named Henry Alfred after my husband's 2 Uncles and my little boy who died.

A terrible railway accident occurred near Kirtlington with the fast train from London consisting of 15 carriages. It seems just before reaching the bridge which crosses the canal the tyre of one of the wheels of the carriage was thrown off the rails and fell over the embankment. 33 people were killed and a great many injured.

On Christmas Day 4 generations of Beesleys dined at our house, my husband's mother, my husband, my son Tom and his son Henry Alfred.

1875 My husband and 3 others sworn in as magistrates at the Quarter Sessions at Banbury on Feb 27th.

My husband's mother and sister left Cornhill and went to live at 31 West

Bar St.

On July 1st we were honoured by a visit from Royalty, the Vicar, Rev Henry Black, bringing Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte, a nephew of Napoleon I, and his son, to visit us. . . . . a he was a student of chemistry.

My brother William (Rusher) and Mr J. P. Barford bought a gold chain and badge to be worn on special occasions by future mayor's, which they presented to the Town Council.

1877 My father (John Golby Rusher) died on 5 March at 5 a.m. aged 92 years - obituary in Banbury Guardian.

1878 Mary Anne Beesley, my husband's sister, died at 31 West Bar St. on 4th August. She was buried in Banbury Cemetery.

My husband received what was called a Dr. Bell's telephone from London on 14th January and fixed a wire from the cellar head across the yard to the laboratory.

1880 My son Tom commenced business as a chemist and druggist at 290 Clapham Rd. London.

1880 On Twelfth Fair Day (Jan 22nd) some sheep were sold in Banbury at 7/6 each. This is accounted for the fact that sheep rot was very bad at the time.

A fire was discovered on 6th November at 3.30 on the premises of Mr. J. Wilks, Parsons St., who lived next door to Mr. Brown's Cake shop which belongs to my husband. . . . owing to the energetic measures taken by the Fire Brigade, the fire was confined to the warehouse with the exception that the thatch on some premises at the rear of Mr. Brown's shop caught fire.

1881 On Jan 18th a memorable snowstorm occurred, trains were snowed up in all directions. Some passengers from London having to remain at Didcot for two nights. Railway communications with Banbury were cut off and a train had to be dug out of the snow between Banbury and Brackley. The snow on the line was 8 ft deep in places and at Cockley Brake it was 9 ft. . .

. . . Twelfth Fair week business in the town was at a complete standstill. The gale was terrific, blowing down many trees, chimney pots and slates. One of Mr. Fields waggons was lost in the snow for 3 days and the waggoner found dead and there were several other deaths from exposure.

On Nov 14th my daughter Bessie went to Bodicote House to teach the Hon Mrs Tritton's little boy Oswald.

1882 The foundation stones of the Wesleyan Schoolroom, Marlborough Rd were laid on June 12th.

Banbury was honoured by a visit of Royalty in the person of Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany on Nov 17th when he laid the foundation stone of the Masonic Hall in Marlborough Rd.

1883 In the summer my husband purchased a tricycle. .

1884 There was an epidemic of small-pox in Banbury in the spring from which several deaths occurred. The water of the town was alleged to be impure.

1886 My husband's mother (Elizabeth Beesley) died on June 11th and was buried in Banbury Cemetery.

1887 My husband disposed of the business to Mr. T.E.B. Blankley of Gt. Easterton, nr. Stamford. We removed to 31 West Bar. on March 28th. On August 24th Aunt Deborah Beesley died aged 83 at 7 Calthorpe Rd and was buried in the Friends Burial Ground, Horsefair.

In April we received news that my grandson Harry had passed his examination for admission to St. Peter's College, (Westminster School) and entered there on Sept. 22nd.

This year (1887) was memorable as the year of the Queen's Jubilee. Mr. W. Edmunds, the Mayor, on New Year's Day, kindly gave a meat tea in the Town Hall. All those in the town of the Queen's age (67) and over were invited; about 235 responded and 85 others who could not be present had their tea sent to them.

June 21st. Jubilee Day. Banbury wore its gayest attire and never presented such a brilliant appearance. The shops and houses were profusely decorated, flags, banners, mottoes and bunting were seen on every hand; many of the poorest houses hanging out a bit of loyalty. A 'Royal Salute' was fired at Britannia Works.....

1888 In January Mr. Brown purchased from my husband the house and shop in Parsons St., in which he lives and carries on his business.

Mr. Gladstone passed through Banbury Station on Nov 10th The train was besieged with his admirers.

1889 On January 1st Mr. Goodman took to the business of chemist and druggist in High St. which my husband had carried on for 41 years.

1890 My grandson Harry was getting quite a young man and was confirmed in Henry VII Chapel in Westminster Abbey by the Bishop of Rochester. The Salvation Army which had been established for some years in Banbury opened their new 'Fortress' in Fish St. (George St). The corner stone of St. Leonard's Church, Grimsbury was laid by the Bishop of Oxford on July 25th.

The Mayor gave a dinner at the Red Lion Hotel on Sept 24th to inaugurate the Banbury Michaelmas Horse Fair and Colt Show.

1891 The census for Banbury was 12,767.

St Leonard's Church was opened on April 7th. The building will accommodate 350 people and cost about £2,850.

1892 My husband, whose health had been failing during the previous year, gradually grew worse... My husband had so much improved that we were beginning to hope he would be restored to health, but I am sorry to say he had had a relapse and at the time I write June 30th still very weak."

(This is the last entry in 'My Life'.)

Barbara Adkins

**A royal occasion in Beesley's Banbury.**

In this royal wedding year it is amusing, and indeed shaming, to read in Beesley (page 550) how Banbury celebrated the coronation of Queen Victoria on 28 June 1838.

"On the day of Her Majesty's coronation, the 28th June 1838, a procession of the Trades &c., similar to that which has been mentioned on the passing of the Reform Bill, was held in commemoration of the event. At two o'clock in the afternoon a great dinner was provided, and served in the Horse Fair, for all the working classes and poor who chose to partake of it. The first course served consisted of 1700 lb of plumpudding: the next was 180 dishes of rumps, ribs, loins, rounds, rands, and briskets of beef, weighing in all 3050 lb; with 1596 lb of bread, and forty-five kilderkins of ale. The tables were forty-five in number, eighty seats being appropriated to each. To each table were appointed a superintendent, four carvers (chiefly tradesmen of the town), and four or more waiters (chiefly youths from the different shops). The guests and waiters amounted to about 4000 persons, exclusive of thousands of spectators. After dinner, old English sports were practised. Cake and tea were served to 865 Sunday-School children, and dancing terminated the proceedings. The day passed without the slightest disorder.

(The expenses incurred by the Committee of Management were as follows:-

	£.	s.	d.
3050 lb Beef.....	78.	2.	9.
1700 lb Pudding.....	42.	10.	0.
1596 lb Bread.....	12.	9.	4.
612 Gallons of Ale.....	44.	2.	0.
Mustard (Salt gratis).....	0.	10.	0.
Tables, use of, and fixing.....	20.	0.	0.
Broken Ware.....	1.	18.	2.
Two Bands, and Ale for them.....	10.	16.	0.
Printing.....	9.	4.	7.
Hall-keepers (on account of Committee meetings,) and Crier.....	3.	1.	6.
	£222. 14. 4.		

Cash subscribed more than required £2. 9s. 8d. The expenses of the procession and sports were provided for by a junior committee, who made a collection, and had the management of those parts. The cake and tea for the children were provided by another committee, from the proceeds of a third subscription.)"

[N.B. The total population of Banbury, including Neithrop and Grimsbury, was 6,422 in 1831, 7,366 in 1841.]

### **Subscriptions**

At the annual general meeting an increase in subscriptions was approved, to £4 per annum for ordinary members and £6 per annum for members receiving records volumes. The new rates will become effective for 1982. Members are asked to amend bankers orders and covenants as appropriate.

### **Hook Norton**

The Hook Norton local history group, which presented such a fine local history exhibit in Oxford last year, has produced a Village Trail booklet for Hook Norton. It is attractive, well illustrated and admirably clear. Alan Gibson writes that the group intends to continue to work together and to produce a series of articles on Hook Norton history.

The booklet is highly recommended and may be obtained from Banbury Museum for 30p.

### **Organs and Organists**

In the last issue we invited contributions on the organs and organists of Banbury. Little did we expect to have to eat our words and our hat. In ignorance we did not know that in 1980 Mr F. E. Burroughes had produced a booklet on the History of the Music at Banbury Parish Church. It tells a fascinating story showing that, contrary to the statement in the Drayton parish register, quoted in the last issue, that Jonathan Hobbs was the first Banbury organist, in fact the first organist and choirmaster was Anthony Cokes appointed in February 1523. However puritan Banbury destroyed its considerable musical inheritance. In the 1620s the choir was disbanded, the organ destroyed and the organist sacked without a pension. Music revived with the restoration, but not till 1765 did Banbury church have a new organ.

The booklet is of great interest and may be obtained from Mr. F. E. Burroughes, St. Mary's Centre, Horsefair, Banbury for 50p + 15p postage.

It is to be hoped that Mr Burroughes will later write up his researches at greater length.

### **Alfred Beesley : Poet**

In the November 1962 issue of *Cake and Cockhorse*, Vol.2, No.2, there was an article by B. J. Burden on Beesley's verses. Anyone interested to read extracts should refer to that issue; they will not be found in the Oxford or any other book of English verse.

# BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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 has also published fifteen records volumes to date. These have included **Banbury Parish Registers** (in six parts: Marriages 1558-1837, Baptisms 1558-1812, Burials 1558-1723); **Banbury Corporation Records: Tudor and Stuart; Banbury Wills and Inventories 1621-1650; A Victorian M.P. and his Constituents: The Correspondence of H. W. Tancred 1841-1860; South Newington Churchwardens' Accounts 1553-1684; Wigginton Constables' Books 1691-1836; and Bodicote Parish Accounts 1700-1822**. Volumes in preparation include **Banbury Wills and Inventories 1591-1620 and 1661-1723; Banbury Burial Register 1723-1812 and Baptisms and Burials 1812-1837**; and an edition of letters to the 1st Earl of Guilford (of Wroxton, father of Lord North the Prime Minister).

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 pm. 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 £6.00 including any records volumes published, or £4.00 if these are excluded.

Application forms can be obtained from the Hon. Membership Secretary.

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