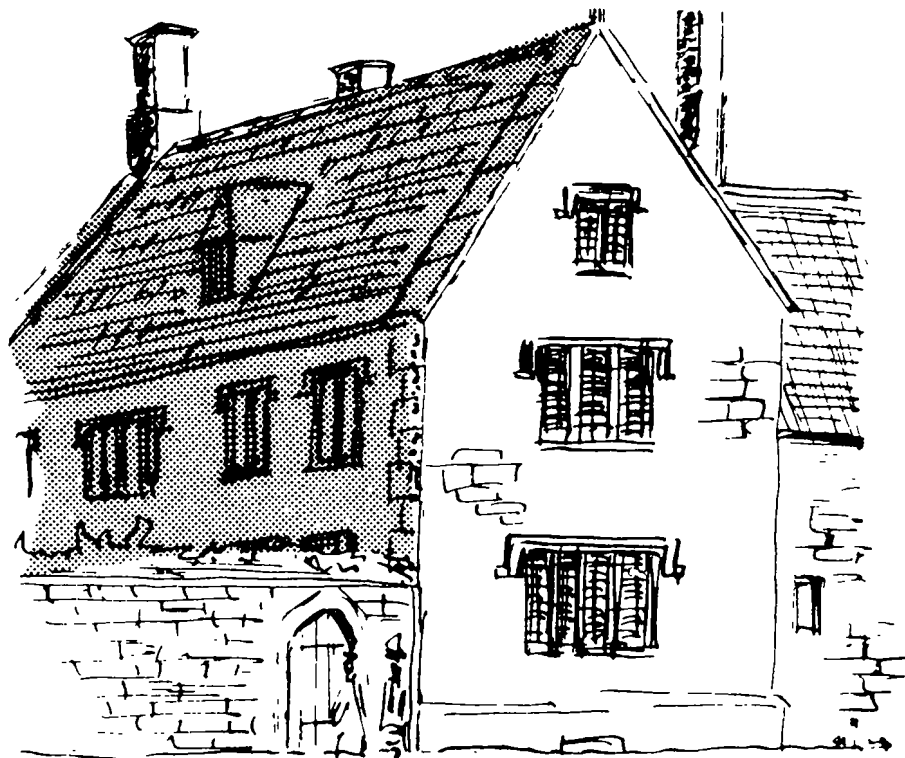


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Details about the Society's activities and
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CAKE & COCKHORSE

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This issue is entirely composed of past affairs of Lower Heyford and Adderbury.

At the Banbury Museum there is an exhibition of items collected by George James Dew of Lower Heyford from 1846 to 1928. It will be open until November 5.

There will be no annual dinner this year, as we had an anniversary celebration in the spring. However, a party is being planned for December 16, 7 for 7.30 at Banbury Museum. Please put it in your diaries. Details will be announced later.

Cover illustration: The original Free Grammar School, Adderbury. Dating from 1589 it was the first recorded school in Adderbury, and was closed in 1962 when the Christopher Rawlins School was opened.

MISCHIEF, PRANKS AND SPARE TIME: ASPECTS OF THE LEISURE OF EDWARDIAN VILLAGE YOUTH

'There isn't no poor now, not like there used to be'. Thus one old lady of Adderbury. For many who grew up in the villages of North Oxfordshire during the early years of this century, the experience of childhood was shaped most of all by their parents' poverty and social class. The education of working class children at that time continued to be subordinated to the imperatives of household economy, and at another level, to what they could and should expect of their own future lives.¹ Outside of school, their spare hours were mostly taken up with tasks that were part of an overall family effort to get by, and this meant that there was often little time left for play. Recreational hours generally were few in contrast to those spent in school, in part-time or casual employment, and in domestic chores. Yet the distinction between work and play was sometimes blurred - the two kinds of activity could, to varying degrees, occur simultaneously - and it was only after entering into full-time employment, on leaving school in one's early teens, that leisure time became more distinct from the hours of work.²

Fanny Hitchman grew up in Clifton, near Deddington, during the first two decades of this century, and her own experience shows how play could be drawn from the labour demanded of children, in connection with the family economy, and why work and play are not often associated in old people's memories:

There were marbles, spinning tops, conkers ... games like that. But we had to help in the home then. We used to go out to a place we knew, early in the morning, and collect mushrooms. We'd bring them back, and mother would put them on the table in a big bowl, select a few big ones, and we'd take the rest to the lady's house nearby. She had an Irish cook who'd spent a long time in France, and did French cooking, which suited the lady, and she was very glad of these cheap mushrooms ... We'd go picking elderberries and elder flowers, sloeberries and such for making wine, we'd pick crab apples for jelly, blackberries and raspberries for jam. After harvest time we'd help mother to gather the leazings, or we'd be off collecting acorns. You'd give some of those out of the sack we'd filled to the pig ... it wasn't good to give too many, and take the rest to a farmer who'd be glad of them ... he had a lot of pigs. Then Let's see ... we'd go out getting horse droppings off the road and carry it in wheelbarrows, we'd even go collecting rabbit bumbles, and sell them too. It all helped keep the pennies rolling in you see ... If they stopped you'd had it.³

Work undertaken by village children can be divided into three broad (but not rigidly distinct) categories: the various unpaid activities associated

with the cottage home and domestic economy; part-time or casual work engaged in in order to supplement the family income, or contribute to a paid family undertaking, as for instance at harvest time; and work sought out on a child's own initiative, often in order to provide a little pocket money that would otherwise have been all-too-often non-existent. Beginning with the first group of activities, tasks expected of children in the home were generally sexually distinct. Household chores such as washing, cleaning rooms or cooking were rarely expected of boys, but there tended to be less sexual division with regard to those tasks which usually took place outside of the home, such as shopping (and at times pleading for credit), helping on the allotments, leazing, looking after younger siblings, carrying beer to the fields or home, or feeding and bedding the pig - a crucial element in cottage economy, and still at this time the main source of meat for many villagers.⁴ S.J. Tyrell has written of preparing Master Pig's dinner while a boy in Aynho: 'Often it was my job to wash and boil the pig's food; then, when it was cooked, put it in a tub and mash it. For the last two months of a pig's life, barley meal was used instead of toppings to finish the fattening process.'⁵ Children (especially girls) were also involved in the curing processes: preparation of the hams, the villagers' 'pictures on the walls',⁶ rendering the fleurn or leaf into lard, cleaning out the chitterlings and tommodge, making brawn, black puddings, saveloys and pork pies. They were of course rewarded for their work with a taste of the fries - the meal of liver, kidneys and scratchings that always followed. Boys were always to be found hanging around the scene of a pigkilling, and not only out of morbid curiosity: if they were lucky they'd get a trotter - 'kids'd pick 'em up and be sucking at 'em all day' - and maybe the bladder as well to make into a football.

Children gathered wild fruit from the hedgerows to take home,⁷ and, poppies from the fields to be sold to the Ushers' pharmaceutical business in Bodicote.⁸ Village boys would also supplement the family income or diet through activities such as fishing and 'spadgering'. Reg Brown of Adderbury East told me about crayfishing:

You'd go along at night and put your nets out, with a bit of old paper tied to it and something like an old bloater's head inside, then they'd come along and you'd have 'em out. You'd probably get half a dozen a time. Old Cholmondeley used to pay us 8d a hundred . . . They're a tasty fish you know, I like them very much myself. They're good food. But when they laid the sewer up in Bodicote, that's what killed them off. It ran into the brook you see. You can't see them now. They used to hide under stones you know, and where the roots of trees would grow out over the bank of the stream. That's where they'd be.⁹

'Spadgering' involved the catching of small birds, both for sport and food, with the emphasis increasingly on the former, as Wilf Walton explained:

We used to creep up and throw nets over the section of hedge, to trap the birds, but I didn't do it too much. My mother called it cruelty. Some'd do it for pies, but most for fun, you know.¹⁰

Boys also experienced vicariously the delights of poaching. The excitement of witnessing what one local man called 'a battle of wits in which every faculty was used to the uttermost'¹¹ permeates Reg Brown's recollection of an occasion involving a notorious Adderbury poacher:

One day, I was down by the mill tail, I saw old 'Ten Ton' get out the biggest pike I've ever seen in my life. He had one of them coats you know, that come down to your knee, big pockets inside and all that . . . but it was so big he couldn't hide it! That's right . . . Well, there it was you see, sleeping in the shadows; he had a wire with a loop on it, and he had it out. Course he shouldn't have been there and he did a dive straightaway. But I can see it now, plain as punch. Terrific fish!¹²

Part-time or casual work occurred at sowing, haymaking and harvest time, and was also realised in tasks such as sheep-tending, weeding, potato-picking, bird-scaring, and stone-picking. Ern Hitchman often picked stones as a lad. Children in the village were paid 'a copper or two a bucket', but this depended on the size of the child and bucket. Some families took on a whole field, and were paid according to how many loads they collected. A stone cart was kept at most farms, alongside the muck cart, hay waggons and trollies. Picking was usually done 'after a ploughing and a good rain'. The stones were used for road-making, but those on the fields 'never got less, they always reappeared ready for another day'.¹³ On top of this kind of work, children always kept a weather-eye open for the extra penny that could go into their own pocket, to be earned by running errands, doing odd jobs, delivering messages and so on. Every evening Dick Plackett, the village carrier, would arrive back from Banbury and draw up his cart by the Coach and Horses on the green. Boys fought to be the first and only one chosen by him to deliver the daily orders of food and other merchandise round the village. For this they were paid sixpence a time. 'That was a lot of money to us in those days'.¹⁴

For Edwardian village youth, fun had often to be seized on the wing, and one welcome source was the unexpected spectacle: soldiers marching along the main road, for example, or the eccentricities of a tramp or village drunkard. Children were quick to latch onto any potential occasion for diversity or delight. Dancing bears were a great attraction, as were one-man bands, both fairly common sights in North Oxfordshire at this time. One man still remembered by various people is Chris Dear, who used to travel around the villages of Banburyshire playing a tin whistle. According to Wilf Walton, 'he could play anything you asked him'. Other people as well attest to his musical prowess. For all the conditions of

deprivation, the leaden hours at school and the many tasks of work, village children sixty to eighty years ago generally exhibited a resilient exuberance of spirit, a quality realised in their 'games, songs, rhymes, inventions, imaginary worlds, and reconstructions of the real world'.¹⁵ At times this exuberance was expressed in mischief-making. Outside of home and school, pranks provided a covert means of retaliation against adult dominance. As Paul Thompson has put it, pranks were 'the most widespread expression of children's exasperation with adults ... universal throughout the country and in all social classes'.¹⁶ 'We had some rare games in those days', Wilf Walton told me:

One of the games we used to play was 'Tippit'. What you'd do is this. Once it was dark and all quiet, we'd fasten a bent pin ... into the top of a window frame, hook a length of thread over this and trail it away to a hiding place ... some bushes usually, and at the end against the window tie a nail, so that when the thread was pulled ... it'd knock against the glass, you see. Well, they'd come out, look round, no one there. They'd go in again ... Usually they didn't notice the thread as it was too dark ... We'd tap again, see? And keep tapping. They might bring a light out and try and spot us, but we'd duck, scarper off if he got too close. 'I know who you bloody well are!' Or: 'What'd you bloody well think you're doing?' ... Things like that they'd say ... A bloke once, he came out with a stick and beat all around. Course, he broke the thread that time, but we got our own back later and did it again ...¹⁷ Sometimes we'd tie two front door handles together and knock on both doors, then hide and watch. Mr. Lester the bobby nearly caught us once ... I spotted him just before he got to us, creeping along with a stick. 'Look out!' I shouted ... away we ran, down to the graveyard ... He didn't catch us.

The village policeman was widely feared by children at this time, and the same appears to have been true in Banbury. As one local correspondent put it in 1901: 'Something akin to a reign of terror exists in some of the streets of Banbury. If children are at play, and a policeman heaves in sight away they have to run ...'¹⁸ In Adderbury the village bobby was prone to whacking children on the bottom with his stick as they went past him; many accordingly gave him a wide berth. I was told of one occasion when a group of children managed to repay his persecution of them through the old trick of stretching a line of thread across a path, at helmet-height, which the unsuspecting bobby walked into on his evening round. Two other means of retaliation against adults who had excited children's spite were smearing door handles with horse dung, and making weird noises at night in an attempt to frighten the superstitious.

Pranks varied from the relatively spontaneous to the more systematically planned and staged. Wilf for instance spoke of times

... years ago, well you can picture it, perhaps on a Saturday evening ... you'd perhaps run against a dozen men, tipsy or practically so ... We never used to do any harm to them, but we'd act the fool see, get their hat off and throw it to one another and all that kind of thing. Get 'em worked up a bit.

Children also used to chase after tramps or eccentric characters, yelling and taunting. I was told of one such man known as Badger the Drover:

He used to drive cows along the road from Deddington to Banbury, to the cattle market. He always did that job. It was funny, because he used to carry his wardrobe on his back: six or seven waistcoats, three or four jackets, several shirts, two or three trousers ... He used to wear them all at once ... Kids used to taunt him as he went along, beating the cows; he used to swear back something terrible.

Olive Richards remembers:

I was late for school once because we'd been taunting Badger Page, and I got into trouble over that. The teacher told my mother. 'Playin' up Badger Page indeed! You get up them stairs before your father comes in an' gives you another tanning'.

Olive Richards also told me of Tusio the Italian:

He had lodgings in Deddington, and then he lived in ... Banbury. He came round every winter with a barrel organ and a monkey on a stick, and in summer he'd be round selling ice cream.

Fanny Hitchman:

One year there was a dwarf. My sister laughed at him because of his size and he chased her. By God could he run!

The more carefully rehearsed pranks often involved as their victim someone whose known foible or idiosyncrasy was being played on. Amos Hiron, for example was renowned for his cantankerousness and this weakness, while making him an obvious target, was also confirmed and implicitly judged by the success of their prank. Wilf Walton:

Once when we were kids we went down into Amos Hiron's garden after dark and into his toilet ... an outside toilet. We lit some newspaper and then trampled it out on the floor so he'd think some tramp ... had spent the night there and been a fool over lighting a fire ... make him think he'd nearly had his toilet burnt down. He got red hot mad about that!

Amos bore the brunt of many pranks, and such tricks were often set up so that culpability would be misplaced, Amos's anger falling on the wrong person and giving the true perpetrators 'some good laughs'. Amos also presented a challenge because he was sharp-witted, and some felt goaded by this into 'trying to get one over on him'. As one person put it: 'He was an odd bloke, but he always had an answer. We'd often be pulling his leg,

but he'd always get the better of us'. Ern Hitchman recalled how they used to exploit the slow-mindedness of Jack, the rabbit-skinner in the West:

He used to hang his skins on a line, so they'd dry out, and we used to nab them from there when it was dark and sell them back to him ... In the end he caught us out ... and put a few dishmops on his line. This lad nipped up, felt it in the dark, all soft and wet you see, and took it for a hide. He had us that time. But we used to play a good few tricks on him. We once leaned this big tub of water against his door, knocked and scarpered. It worked! A flood of water went sailing down the long passage from the front door ... to the two rooms off either side ... His wife was called Sarah, and she lived to a ripe old age, past ninety. A bag of skin and bone she was ... She had a face like a cobweb!

Mischief such as this constituted a sort of surreptitious, quasi-realised step towards a sense of autonomy, though always made in a group rather than individually. Similarly covert, and part of a particular social network exclusive the village children, were the scurrilous tales and verses made up behind adults' backs, and in them some of the children's real feelings and attitudes briefly surfaces:

Some of the rhymes and stories we used to have of certain people, well they were rather dirty, to be frank with you.¹⁹

Sometimes children's mischief became criminal. Petty theft seems to have been the most common offence, though it would appear to have been less rife in the early twentieth century in Adderbury and surrounding villages than previously: in 1880, for instance, the public were warned that when attending auction sales in Adderbury they '(and especially women) had better look to their pockets and purses, as persons had lately had the latter purloined at such times'.²⁰ Punishment as well had grown less severe. A popular crime among children in Adderbury was sweet-stealing, and in 1876 a local boy of thirteen was given twelve stripes with the birch and ordered to spend one day in prison for this offence.²¹ By the end of the century sentences of such severity were rarely passed on children, and the 1908 Children Act prevented children under fourteen being imprisoned for any offence.²² Offenders caught stealing sweets in Adderbury were often just given a cuff round the head and kick up the pants. One of the shops favoured by village lads for sweet-stealing at this time was 'Crotchet' Bennett's, near the girls school:

He had home-made toffee, and he spat on his hands to roll it into balls. He kept it in boxes on the counter and when he wasn't looking boys would dip their hands in the boxes and help themselves. His wife might see ... 'Keep your hands out of those boxes!' ... She had a high shrill voice.

One boy had a special technique for diverting the shopkeeper's attention:

Me and my brothers used to get a Sat'day ha'penny for pocket money and we'd go to the sweet shop man and ask for some of



Adderbury House, July 13, 1911-12

his home-made sweets . . . We'd always ask for ones in a jar on the top shelf, then we'd knock a pocket full from the counter when his back was turned.

Sometimes, as well, deliberate acts of vandalism occurred, as in garden trampling, or in another case related to me from personal experience. At one time, so I was told, the gentry of Adderbury 'tried planting saplings . . . on the green, but us kids had 'em down that same night. They didn't try it again'.

Finally, there was another, altogether mysterious kind of 'mischief' which, as they grew up, children (particularly the girls) were warned against getting into in their spare time, and this volved what was at times solemnly referred to as 'trouble'. This was no ordinary kind of trouble, the children were certain of that, but what it amounted to was rarely explained. What is now recognized as an essential part of the educational curriculum was at that time skimped and suppressed, causing heartache and guilt that for many deeply scarred their private adult lives. Children were usually left to piece together the facts of life from hushed whispers and occasional snippets of often grotesquely distorted information, and were generally kept in the dark also with regard to pregnancies and imminent births in the family or neighborhood. The pitch which prejudice could reach is indicated by Mr. Dance: 'I remember my mother being outraged at this woman in Adderbury who'd crossed her legs in a church service! Women weren't supposed to have legs.' Puzzled fear and shame were for many the inevitable result of such systematically propagated ignorance:

We always used to be told: 'Don't go near the men and boys, and don't get into trouble, because if you do you can't come back here. You must go to the workhouse'. And that's what happened - they went to the workhouse. Unless something could be fixed up . . . Perhaps there'd be an older man around who'd want someone in the house, he'd take her in. Not always the children though, they might be left there to work. I remember one girl went in with twins, and she got fixed up outside, but the children didn't . . .²³ Couse we didn't know what the 'trouble' was that was referred to you see, I did later of course but at that time I couldn't make it out. We lived in the dark then, whereas now children of eleven and upwards know more about it all than I do . . . and I've had two children. We used to find out just by whispering to each other you know, one girl'd whisper something and it'd get passed on. I know one lady and she told me she was warned in the same way, but she said: 'Me and my brother Phil made a pact that if we got into trouble, whatever that trouble turned out to be, we'd come to each other and we wouldn't go back home, nor would we go to the workhouse. We'd go to the river'.

Children's spare time in Edwardian Adderbury - as in neighbouring villages - was also taken up with organized games of various kinds. For boys, cricket and football on the green were among the most popular, and these took place both inside and outside of school hours. Village lads' version of football at this time was a very rough-and-tumble affair, and when Walker, the schoolmaster, joined in it presented to the boys (according to one old man) a chance to retaliate to the schoolmaster's brutality by an 'accidental' kick in the shins every so often. It was not only the master who received such treatment, however. One man rolled up his trouser leg and showed me the scars which remain on his leg as testimony to the ravages of village football. Another feature noted by several people was the quietness of the place then, as they played at their games. Reg Brown told me:

We used to play cricket in the Oxford Road, by the green, and the only time we'd be disturbed would be by a carter shifting 'archel' stone up from the station to Twyfords. This was twice a day usually, and that's all. That was the only time we'd have to budge the pitch. People'd come out with a bit of food and tea from the houses and sit by the side of the road, watching the game.

These of course were boys' games. Some games were held in common, as for instance Kick Donkey Kick, or Follow My Leader, but girls also played, on their own, at such things as shopkeeper, hopscotch, dancing games, skipping and hide-and-seek. Fanny Hitchman remembered how snakes used to be a hazard at this last game. She once sat down to hide behind a bush, only to find she had planted herself on a snake's nest, and she told me of when 'a snake went up Ettie Page's leg':

We grabbed hold of her, and she was shrieking. We shook her, and started tearing her clothes off her. It got away. We very gingerly picked up her clothes with a stick, and then got braver and turned them inside out. But we didn't see it.

Interspersed among these everyday games were certain calendar customs and periodic events, such as Valentine's Day, Shick-Shack Day, Shrove Tuesday, May Day, Guy Fawkes Night, Christmas carolling, and so on.²⁴ Banbury Fair was always looked forward to be children as much as adults, and as with Adderbury Fair, it was a special day in their year.²⁵ Adderbury Fair was held on Club Day in the village, and for children was far more attractive than the club procession and band music. The green was covered in stalls and sideshows - coconut stalls, roundabouts, swings, shooting galleries, a donkey derby and all the rest.²⁶ Harry Austin told me:

First Wednesday in June, that's when they called it The Club ... They used to have the band here you know. They used to have a proper do, they used to get drunk and fighting ... All the green used to be full up ... Ooh! It used to be packed out.

One source of fun and mischief at Adderbury Fair was the juvenile

implement of misrule sold by showpeople called a squib: 'You used to buy things like tubes of toothpaste, full of water, and then you went round squibbing people'. Another person remembers: 'They used to get the girls and get 'em, squib it down their necks and all that business you know'.²⁷ Another delight was a 'peculiar sort of toffee':

I don't know what you'd call it. There used to be an old lady, she used to fasten a hook to one of the telegraph poles on the green, and she had some stuff, and she used to throw it round and round and round. Then she would draw it into a long bar and chop it up into sections. They cost a penny each.

Though Adderbury Fair continued into the 1950s, its links with Club Day had long since undergone a process of attenuation as the economic and cultural functions of village friendly societies and benefit clubs diminished in the post-World War One period. This process had also been set in the context of two other major patterns of change, both of which occurred in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods (though their roots extend deep into the nineteenth century). The long depression in agriculture from the 1870s, and the failure of unionism to bring about any significant, long-term improvement in the social and material condition of the agricultural labourer and his family, were two crucial factors contributing to an acceleration in the process of rural depopulation at this time.²⁸ In the context of this first pattern of change in North Oxfordshire there occurred another, a hegemonic shift manifest in a strategic revival of paternalism, and an attempt to re-establish the ideology of community over class interests and values. This created class tension and conflict between, on the one hand, forces from 'below' striving for a sense of independence and the retention of certain popular customs, and on the other, forces from 'above' striving for deference and control, for village society on their terms. The gentry-oriented version of a mythical rural past was the death-knell of a once vibrant plebeian culture.

This polite version of village life was realised in events such as spelling bees, penny readings, official village concerts, cottage lectures, flower shows, reorganized May Day and carolling customs, temperance teas, and so on - the kind of event referred to by the vicar in 1881 as 'innocent and rational pastimes for the village'.²⁹ These innovations naturally affected children, and in a range of ways, but one quite central strand which I would like to focus on here is that associated with a folk ideology of rural work and culture which became especially prevalent in the village during the 1890s and 1900s. This manifested itself in an attempted 'revival' of cottage crafts (e.g. lace-making, lettering, needlework, weaving, fretwork, and so on, activities which the vicar, Rev. Gepp, believed would provide young people in the village with 'some sensible amusements for the winter evenings' as well as encouraging home industries³⁰); in the organization of 'old English sports'; in the teaching of morris and country dances to village schoolchildren; and in the

collecting of so-called 'folk' songs from the aged of Adderbury.³¹ All of these phenomena were gentry-inspired and organized, and involve a highly selective incorporation and reinterpretation of elements of a past rural culture. They are, as well, quite of a piece with the manners exhibited and expected at Sunday School and day school treats, events which became regular annual institutions for the young during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³²

The typical pattern for such days was a church service, a rectory tea, prizes, games and perhaps an organized entertainment in the early evening provided by a magician or a magic lantern show. Outings also began to occur. The Cawleys - residents of Adderbury House - gave an annual treat to the village children and their mothers throughout the Edwardian period. In 1911, the children marched up to the front of the hall and sang a couple of songs, then dispersed to enjoy the various amusements provided - steam roundabouts, boat-swings and so on - while 'the elders enjoyed the beauty of their surroundings'. Tea was served in the 'delightfully shaded' paddock. Towards dusk the grounds were 'thrown open to the public', trees and buildings were illuminated, and dancing begun on the croquet lawn. Music for this was provided by the Banbury Borough Band.³³ 'Charley' Coleman also recalled the new sixpence given by the Cawleys to every child on his or her birthday. 'This kind action was much appreciated because in those days sixpence was a lot of money for a child'.³⁴ But the passport of deference was often required for attendance at a gentry-organized treat. The memory of one such occasion stung Fanny Hitchman:

Miss Kitty, she used to give strawberry and cream teas for children, but you had to curtsy in front of her and my father forbade me. He wouldn't have me bowing and scraping in front of her, because he said she was no better than he was. Oh, I was so upset, not to go, I cried ... I'd never tasted strawberries before. I was the only child who missed it ... Looking back I'm glad he made me refuse.³⁵

Yet what we have also to note, in conclusion, is an increasing adoption by the younger generations of cultural values and activities associated with a wider and emergent pattern of innovation during this period, and a refusal by the young Arcadian 'folk' customs and pursuits.³⁶ There can be no neat periodisation for this change, and no tidy separation of distinct cultural areas and ideologies associated with either old or young working class villagers, or the dominant gentry class. But this partial resistance, and a new structure of feeling among the generation growing up in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, is nevertheless apparent, and was crucially connected with the 'take-off' of the modern communications industry and with the related new urban proletarian culture - a vortex of novel cultural influences and attractions which gradually drew into its compass both those who left the village and those who remained. At a relatively minor level, there was the introduction in the village of new cultural events,

such as fancy dress shows, amateur dramatics, comic recitations, burlesque sketches reminiscent of the halls, bicycle races, whilst drives and so on - to which the young especially were drawn - but the impact of the new cultural commodities and more commercialised patterns of popular leisure, aligned to other changes in the social structure, had enormous repercussions, especially after the war. And for all else we should need elsewhere to say of them, these novel cultural forces and products at least provided village youth with something of an alternative to which they could turn. It is in these senses that the period dealt with here was so transitional. As one villager put it: 'I feel as if I grew up with one foot in the past, and the other in the future'.

Michael Pickering

NOTES

1. I have sketched this feature of village children's lives in a previous article: see 'Schooling Children in Edwardian England', *Cake and Cockhorse*, Vol.8, No.8, Spring 1982; see also M. Pickering, *Village Song and Culture* (hereafter *V.S. & C.*), London (Croom Helm) 1982, pp.135-6.
2. This article draws heavily on oral evidence - this being the best available historical source - and seeks to illustrate something of the diversity of recreational activities among local working class village youth. It deals in the main with children's lives up to school-leaving age, i.e. around 13-14 years, though some of the recollections utilised here relate to an age-range just beyond that, i.e. up to around 16 years. Most of the evidence is taken from 'interviews' with natives of Adderbury, though occasionally also from sessions with people born and bred in other N. Oxon villages. Where this occurs it is indicated. For further popular testimony of childhood experience in the Edwardian period, see P. Thompson, *The Edwardians*, London, 1975; T. Thompson, *Edwardian Childhoods*, London, 1981; *Oral History*, vol.3, no.2, Autumn 1975, whole issue; I. Stickland, *The Voices of Children, 1700-1914*, Oxford, 1973, pp.192-222; G.E. Evans, *The Days That We Have Seen*, London, 1975, pp.123-139.
3. For leazing, see M. Pickering, *V.S. & C.*, pp.67-8.
4. The cottage pig, as Francis George Heath described it, was a 'live savings bank'. (Quoted J. Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, Harmondsworth, 1968 edn., p.166). As Fanny Hitchman put it to me: 'The pigs, when they were alive, were well-kept. They had to be so much depended on their health and happiness ... Our mother used to go out at night to put the pig to bed. She'd go out with a candle or a lantern, and a stick, and she'd put our pig to bed ... every night the same'. Vera Hodgkins of Shutford made the same point: 'The pig was as important as the family'. Meat other than from a pig was becoming more common in N. Oxon among labouring families during the 1900s - generally enjoyed on a Sunday and cooked at one of the local bakers - but pigs were still the main source of meat for the majority of working villagers. (Note, on this, A. Wilson Fox, 'Agricultural Wages in England and Wales during the last fifty years', in W.E. Minchington, ed., *Essays in Agrarian History*, 2 vols., Newton Abbot, 1968, II, p.142; information also from Mr. Lyne, Adderbury East.) Though there does tend to have been less sexual division of tasks outside the home, it should however be noted that many of them still fell on the girls. Being 'little mothers' is perhaps the most notable case in point: the village schoolmistress noted on 24.5.1916 that mothers were beginning to ask for the bigger girls to remain at home whilst they went out to work in the fields. (Adderbury Girls School Log Book). Cf., for an earlier period, J. Kitteringham, 'Country Work Girls in Nineteenth Century England', in R. Samuel, ed., *Village Life and Labour*, London, 1975, pp.84-5. See also, S. Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women*, London, 1979.
5. S.J. Tyrell, *A Countryman's Tale*, London, 1973, p.238.

6. Ironic reference to the 'still lives' on the cottagers' walls surpassing those in the manor house was often made.
7. Though blackberries were collected elsewhere in the region, according to Dunstan Walker, the Adderbury girls schoolmistress, children in the village were unable to pick any as Adderbury was unproductive in the fruit. (Adderbury Girls School Log Book, 24.9.1917.)
8. See J. H. Fearon, 'Some Notes on Bodicote', Cake and Cockhorse, Vol. 3, No. 7, Spring 1967, p. 139.
9. Rev. C. F. Cholmondeley was vicar of Adderbury from 1913 to 1935; for a sketch-portrait of him, see A. J. F. Hart, Some Recollections of the Banbury Clerical Society, 1910-1961, n.d., n.p.
10. Flora Thompson noted the same ambiguity of motive in the 1880s at Juniper Hill. (See F. Thompson, Larkrise to Candleford, London, 1971 edn., p. 161.) For cooking facilities in Adderbury, see M. Pickering, V.S. & C., p. 135. Various birds were used to supplement the cottage diet, e.g. blackbirds, thrushes, linnets, fieldfares etc., but sparrows were the commonest.
11. S. J. Tyrell, p. 90.
12. 'Ten Ton' was the nickname of William Paynton, an ironic reference to his shape and size compared with that of his wife: he was slight of build and only five foot in height, while she was getting on for a foot taller, and weighed twenty stone. 'When she sat down on a bus', as one person put it, 'no one could sit next to her'. Because of his smallness of stature, people in Adderbury used to say he could walk through a wheatfield without stooping, and not be seen. Poaching was his main occupation, and according to one person, 'he'd poach anything'. The mill referred to was that in East Adderbury, on the Sorbrook; it was converted to steam after the First World War, and had become defunct as a mill by 1939.
13. On stone-picking, cf. G. E. Evans, Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay, London, 1972 edn., pp. 75-78.
14. Cf. children's ways of obtaining pocket money in rural South Oxon, in R. E. Moreau, The Departed Village, London, 1968, pp. 129-30.
15. J. Walvin, Leisure and Society 1830-1950, London and New York, 1978, p. 118.
16. P. Thompson, 'The War With Adults', Oral History, vol. 3, no. 2, Autumn 1975, p. 31.
17. See I. and P. Opie, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren, London, 1970 edn., pp. 389-90 for window-tapping.
18. Banbury Guardian, 21.3.1901.
19. Cf. I. and P. Opie, pp. 93-97, 154-74, 361-376. The use of nicknames is another instance of this clandestine process, but nicknames were not of course confined to a children's subculture and were for the most part only mildly denigratory, if that. Many such nicknames were once common in Adderbury, e.g. 'Stagey' (attached to a woman with a predilection for ornate flowery hats). On this subject, see J. Morgan, C. O'Neill, R. Harré, Nicknames, Their Origins and Social Consequences, London, 1979.
20. Banbury Guardian, 15.7.1880.
21. Banbury Guardian, 30.11.1876. On rural juvenile crime and punishment, see P. Horn, The Victorian Country Child, Kineton, 1979, chapter 11.
22. I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, Children in English Society, 2 vols., London, 1973, II, pp. 492-4.
23. It should be noted that there were cases of 'love childs' being taken in by the girl's parents, but these were exceptional at this time. Hasty weddings were a more common solution, if the male party could be made to accept his responsibility; weddings where the girl had a bun in the oven were not infrequent, according to my informants. Cf. F. Thompson, p. 143-5. On illegitimacy, see also I. Pinchbeck and M. Hewitt, II, pp. 582-610, and, P. Laslett and K. Oosterveen, 'Long-term trends in Bastardy in England', Population Studies, XXVII, 2, 1973, pp. 255-84.

24. See M. Pickering, V.S. & C., pp.35, 38-43, 48; J.H. Fearon, p.142; A. Parker, 'Oxfordshire Village Folklore', Folklore, vol.24, 1913, pp.74-91; P.H. Ditchfield, Old English Customs, London, 1896, p.120; I. and P. Opie, pp.263-66.
25. Children in Adderbury were given a holiday for both these fairs. See for instance, Adderbury Girls School Log Book, 16.10.1912, 28.5.1915. For Banbury Fair see B. Trinder, 'Banbury Fair in the Nineteenth Century', Cake and Cockhorse, Vol.4, no.2, 1968; M. Pickering, V.S. & C., pp.31, 39, 99, 101-7, 123.
26. The coconut shies were apparently set up on the small area of grass in front of the Red Lion, and people threw at them from across the other side of the Banbury-Oxford high road.
27. Squibs had long been objected to by the respectable, and periodic pleas were made for their suppression; e.g. the Banbury Advertiser in 1877 attacked 'this dirty amusement' as a 'senseless toy', asserting that 'the inventor of it ought to be put in the stocks', and two years later an irate correspondent referred to them as 'ladies' tormentors' (Banbury Advertiser, 25.10.1877, Banbury Guardian, 2.10.1879). See also S. Alexander, St. Giles's Fair 1830-1914, History Workshop pamphlet no.2, Oxford, 1970, p.33.
28. The population of Adderbury and Milton declined from a nineteenth century peak of 1670 in 1841, to 1281 in 1901 and 1353 in 1911, falls of 23% and 19% respectively (Census of England and Wales, 1841-'911). This pattern of decline was of course general to the whole region. These figures should, however, only be regarded as an indication of the incidence of migration and emigration during this period. On this, see P.A. Graham, The Rural Exodus, London, 1892, and J. Saville, Rural Depopulation in England and Wales, 1851-1951, London, 1957.
29. Adderbury Parish Magazine, February 1881.
30. Banbury Guardian, 10.9.1908. Rev. H.J. Gepp was vicar of Adderbury from 1873-1913.
31. For further discussion of this, see M. Pickering, V.S. & C. The links between this folk ideology and the populist imperialism and patriotism of the period require separate treatment.
32. A sufficient number of attendances was required in order to be eligible for such treats (see e.g. Adderbury Parish Magazine, Dec. 1900).
33. Banbury Guardian, 20.7.1911.
34. J.C. Coleman, 'My Personal Memories', unpublished manuscript.
35. Miss Kitty Emmett (d.1952) was an Irish American Catholic whose inherited wealth brought her to England in quest of a nobleman husband. (For details of her immediate forebears, see D.N.B. VI, and D.A.B., III.) She married the ninth Earl of Desmond and Denbigh in 1928. As Fanny put it to me: 'She had money and wanted a title, he'd lost his money but had a title: they were ideally matched'.
36. This cultural refusal can of course only be identified longitudinally; the pressures of discipline and conformity complicate the picture in the short-term. Other gentry-organized events also raised different attitudes, and as John Gillis has put it, in discussing youth in Oxford during this period, 'those occasions when sweets were given out and entertainment provided, particularly at a time when both were rarities', naturally created fond memories for the children who benefitted. (J.R. Gillis, 'The Evolution of Juvenile Delinquency in England, 1890-1914', Past and Present, no.67, May 1975, pp.96-126: see pp.106-7.)

MARY DEW (1845-1936) OF LOWER HEYFORD:
A MODEL VICTORIAN TEACHER

Introductory note. The County Museum Service decided in 1983 to give Oxfordshire people an opportunity to examine some of the remarkable collection of documents and other unusual items gathered together and carefully preserved by the Dew family of Lower Heyford. The following article, concerned with one member of the family, is based upon this material, as well as upon the reminiscences of their surviving daughter, Miss D.B. Dew, and other sources, including local newspapers and the records of Oxfordshire Education Committee. I should like to express my appreciation of the help given to me by Miss Dew, without whose memories and interest many of the intricate details of village school life would have been lost.

'Among my mixed schools under a mistress I have a school which is a pattern for all village schools, both as regards the teacher and the manager, at Lower Heyford'. Report by the Revd. H. Adair Pickard on Schools in the Oxford District, in Report of the Committee of Council on Education for 1878, P.P.1878-79, Vol. XXIII, 667.

The parish of Lower Heyford, with its neat stone houses and diminutive market square, lies to the south of Banbury on the Bicester to Chipping Norton road. Even in 1871 its population (excluding that of the neighbouring hamlet of Caulcott) only numbered 434 and a decade later this had shrunk to 377, as a consequence of emigration and migration. Yet despite the community's small size, its village school achieved a notable record of success in the Victorian era and, indeed, up to the First World War. That reputation was due primarily to the influence of its head teacher, Mrs. Mary Dew (née Banfield), who was mistress there from 1867 until her retirement in July 1913.

Mary Banfield - or Polly, as she was known to members of the family - was born at Westmeston in Sussex on 10th July, 1845. She was the sixth child of Samuel Banfield, a local agricultural labourer and farm bailiff, and his second wife, Mary. The household was eventually to include ten children, and Samuel had, in addition, a son and a daughter from his first marriage. He was about twenty years older than his second wife and was already in his mid-fifties when Mary was born.¹

The little girl's early years seem to have passed uneventfully, save for the regular increase in family size. From time to time the daily round was enlivened by visits on foot to Brighton, which was about six miles away, but overall the pattern of life was hard, with little money to spare. The children were expected to help around the home as soon as they were able, and this meant that once harvest was over, Mary and her sisters would go out gleaning to secure flour to be used for the household's winter bread supply. Pig-killing, too, was an occasion when Mrs. Banfield expected her daughters to provide assistance.² Yet despite family poverty, Mary attended school from an early age, first at Ditchling, which lay about

three miles distant, and then at Westmeston, once a suitable building had been constructed.³ In the classrooms of those days, the older pupils were expected to help with the instruction of their younger colleagues, and Mary soon showed her ability both in that direction and as a scholar in her own right. A surviving copy book which she used at Westmeston in May 1854 reveals the moral and religious flavour of the curriculum. The first sentences in it read: 'He who serves God, serves a good master', and 'Man proposes and God disposes'.⁴ Many years later, when she had moved to Lower Heyford, it became the custom there, too, to begin each day's writing lesson with a similar proverb or 'wise saying'.

The Westmeston rector, who was also a diocesan inspector of schools, recognised the girl's aptitude as an instructor, as well as her moral suitability - a vital pre-requisite for would-be teachers in those days.⁵ In 1859 he arranged for her to become apprenticed as a pupil teacher at West Hove National Girls' School.⁶ She was to remain there for five years and nine months, continuing her apprenticeship even after the death of her father in December 1861, an event which placed great financial strain upon the family. Whilst at Hove she lodged with a Mrs. Davey, who had earlier been employed as a cook-housekeeper. In her retirement she organised dinner parties for some of the wealthy families of Hove, and often when she went to prepare for these she took Mary with her to help.⁷ This had the advantage of enabling the girl to learn some of Mrs. Davey's culinary skills, but it also meant much hard work. She was likewise expected to assist her landlady with the household chores at the weekend, no doubt in part payment for her board and lodgings, and this included scrubbing the area steps, a task she particularly disliked. As a pupil-teacher, her day began at 6.30 a.m. when she went to receive instruction from the headmistress, briefly returning to her lodgings for breakfast, before starting her teaching stint. Most evenings were taken up with study, and in writing answers to such questions as: 'How would you avail yourself of the natural inquisitiveness of children without making them forward or troublesome?' or 'In what cases of discipline would you seek the interference of the managers of your school and in cases where you could not obtain this assistance state how you would endeavour to supply its place?'⁸

In the long run her diligence was rewarded, for she succeeded in gaining a place at Brighton diocesan training college, which she entered in January 1865, one of nineteen students beginning a two-year course.⁹ The premises were commodious and the staff comprised a male principal, a female superintendent, three 'governesses', and a master for drawing and for music. Each student had to pay an entrance fee of £6.

Once again, Mary Banfield set to work with a will, learning by heart all the rules of grammar, and generally proving a successful student. She graduated in December 1866 with a certificate in the First division of the Third class, this being the highest grade which could be secured under

the then governmental elementary Code regulations. Promotion to a higher class could only be attained by recommendation of Her Majesty's Inspectors after service in the schools for a number of years. Soon after this she was appointed headmistress of Lower Heyford National School, at a salary of £40 a year plus a free house.¹⁰ According to her daughter, one of the principal attractions of Lower Heyford was that it had a railway station, which permitted easy communication with her family in Sussex. Almost to the end of her life, Mary paid regular visits to her relatives in the Ditchling area. Indeed, her mother did not die until November 1907, by which time she was aged about 97.¹¹

At the time of Miss Banfield's appointment, elementary education in Lower Heyford had reached a very low ebb. According to the rector, the Revd. Charles Fort, there were only dame schools available, 'and these for the most part of an inferior kind'. Another problem was that the village lacked a resident landlord who could contribute towards the building of a school: 'there is not a single resident in the Parish of independent means', he wrote. 'The upper class consists of tenant Farmers, kindly disposed, but of small means'.¹² Nevertheless, the president and scholars of Corpus Christi College, who owned most of the land, were persuaded not only to donate a site for the school, adjoining the market square, but to give £50 in cash to help with construction costs. In the meantime, once certain essential alterations had been carried out, it was decided to begin classes in the sitting room of the house which already stood on the proposed school site and which was to serve as the mistress's dwelling. The new, purpose-built school attached to it was only opened formally on 17th January, 1868, when a celebratory tea was held for the scholars and their parents.¹³

It was doubtless with some trepidation that Mary arrived at Lower Heyford on 24th May, 1867, to commence her duties. She was accompanied by her seven-year-old nephew, William, who came to keep her company for the first three months, and they were met at the railway station by Mr. Coles, the rector's gardener. He escorted them to their new home, with its sparse though adequate furnishings. The sitting room, for example, only had one arm chair, the rest of the chairs being cane seated or windsors.¹⁴ Their first night was rather disturbed, however, as the two brothers, Caleb and Jack Brock, who lived next door, were engaged in a brawl. There was much drunkenness in Lower Heyford at that time, and it was quite common for men to come out of the public houses and engage in a fight in the street.

Soon after this rather inauspicious introduction to the village, Mary went to a meeting at the rectory to make the acquaintance of the mothers of her potential pupils. According to later report, when they saw how young she was, they were highly sceptical as to her ability to keep order, murmuring that the boys would 'soon have her out of the school'.¹⁵ In reaching that conclusion they quite underestimated the young teacher's determined character.

Against this background, on 28th May teaching began, the initial entry in the log book reading: 'The school opened for the first time by the Rev^d. C. Fort. 22 scholars admitted. Children very deficient in arithmetic. Very few any knowledge of writing'.¹⁶ These latter deficiencies the new mistress, with her keen dark eyes, black hair, and quiet but firm manner, was resolved to remedy as rapidly as possible. Already by 3rd June, she could report: 'The first class worked simple addition sums on their slates correctly for the first time', while on 27th June came the entry: 'The 1st Class wrote in copy books for the first time'. Small wonder that at the end of that opening term the rector noted: 'I examined the whole School today, preparatory to their dismissal at the end of the week, for the Harvest Holidays. The progress made is generally very satisfactory - especially in Arithmetic: . . . when the school was opened at the end of May, they were almost wholly ignorant. The system pursued in teaching this subject appears to me to be very sound & good. I have been entirely satisfied in every respect throughout this Term'.

By the following October the number of pupils had climbed to 46. At this stage some of the children paid a school fee of 2d. per week and some 1d., while the Rose Charity Bequest paid for certain of the larger families. Later on this latter fund was used to provide prizes for good attendance or other achievements in the school.

Mary, meanwhile, enjoyed good relations with Charles Fort, the rector, and when he died prematurely in 1868, his mother sent her 'a little remembrance' of one 'who often spoke to me of you with great pleasure as a willing & able teacher in the Heyford school'. She was to enjoy an equally good rapport with Mr. Fort's successor, the Revd. Henry Furneaux, and his wife. She was also to win praise from those far sterner judges, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. These included the Revd. Henry W. Bellairs, who at the end of her first year at the school reported encouragingly: 'The children are backward from early neglect, but their mistress is doing her best to repair this, with every prospect of success'.¹⁷ The battle was an uphill one initially, and when punctuality, regularity of attendance, cleanliness, and a host of minor virtues were insisted upon by the mistress, some villagers questioned their necessity. In the long run, though, they were won over, and soon Miss Banfield was earning glowing reports from H.M. Inspectors. This even applied to the Revd. H. Adair Pickard, who succeeded Bellairs in 1872 and was regarded as a harsh and irascible taskmaster by many rural teachers. His comments, included in the Parliamentary Papers for 1878 and quoted at the head of this article, are an indication of his respect for Mary's skills as an instructor. She was one of the teachers whom he regularly invited to take tea with him in Oxford. On 30th June, 1877, for example, she attended a garden party there, in company with her friends, John and Judith Neale, the master and mistress of Steeple Aston school.

As a consequence of these successes, Mary's salary steadily



Lower Heyford School group in 1893. Mrs Dew is on the left; on the right is Emily Gold, her assistant.

increased, rising from the £40 a year paid in 1867 to £52 in 1874 and £54 a year later. By 1904, when Oxfordshire County Council had assumed responsibility for all the elementary schools within its area, her salary had reached £80 4s. a year, plus free fuel.¹⁹ At that date she was assisted by a mistress in charge of the infants, who was paid £40 per annum, a pupil teacher, who earned £12 per annum, and a thirteen-year-old monitress, who received £5 4s. a year. There were 81 children in average attendance at the school.¹⁹

In carrying out her work, Mary received the full backing of the rector, Henry Furneaux, who took his position as school manager seriously. Entries in the log book reveal that he gave tests to the children every month or two, while just before the annual visit of the HMI he would provide extra dictation practice and the like, in preparation for that major event of the school year. He also assisted with day-to-day instruction and normally took the older children twice a week for Bible studies.²⁰ When he decided to retire from his incumbency in the autumn of 1892, the villagers organised a petition, appealing to him to stay on. They gave as one of their principal reasons for so doing, the successful condition of the school: 'During your incumbency, and under your constant care and able supervision, our parish School has risen to eminence, and is an institution of

which we are all naturally proud; and we fear the mistress will greatly miss that able assistance which you have always afforded her, and that the character of the school may in consequence suffer'.²¹ But Furneaux, in refusing their appeal, drew attention to the central importance of Mary's own role:

The continued and most exceptional excellence of our school has been, as you note, the great feature of my incumbency, and, as I firmly believe, the chief instrument of the manifold improvement in the parish which it has been . . . my great pleasure to observe and acknowledge; but this had already begun before my appointment and has gone on under the same mistress ever since; and I believe that almost any one in my position would have recognised her rare qualifications and uniform success, and would have given her that constant and unfailing support which is the chief assistance with which I can credit myself²².

Future events were to confirm that his comments were fully justified, for Lower Heyford continued its notable career after his departure. In 1891, for example, a scholar had been awarded one of the very few county council scholarships on offer, and that success even led a Bicester headmaster to write to Mary to ask for advice on how to proceed in the case of one of his own candidates. But in 1894, two other children were similarly successful.²³ It is significant that as late as November 1909, one of H. M. Inspectors of Schools could report: 'The Tone of this School continues to be admirable and the work is carried out by [the headmistress] with her accustomed skill, energy and good influence'.²³

Nor was it only in academic subjects that the pupils excelled. Awards for needlework were won under the special Oxford Prize Scheme on many occasions, and from the early 1890s drawing became an integral part of the routine for the boys, in accordance with Education Department policy.²⁵ During the Boer War military drill was also included in the curriculum and Mary had to attend meetings at Oxford town hall where she was instructed, along with other teachers, in the art of marching and counter-marching, etc. by a sergeant from Cowley barracks. She was then expected to pass on this information to her own pupils, using broom sticks to serve as rifles!²⁶

In her concern for the welfare of her pupils, Mary went round to the farmers and other better off members of village society, asking for cast off boots for the use of the poorer children. Those youngsters who came from a distance had to bring their mid-day meal with them - often just bread and lard, washed down with cold water. But if they were able to afford an egg, this would be boiled for them in the schoolhouse kitchen, while others brought a potato which was roasted in the oven of the kitchen range. Out of her own pocket, Mary also provided a cup of warm milk at morning playtime for one or two delicate girls. And, as Mary's daughter recalls, those children who came to school wet were always allowed to dry

themselves before the fire in the infants' room or even in the sitting room of the schoolhouse.²⁷

On a rather different level, Mary also purchased magazines to amuse and instruct her pupils. Surviving accounts for the early 1870s reveal that these included such journals as the Children's Friend, Infant Magazine, and Chatterbox.²⁸ By the end of the 1890s, the practice had been so extended that on Wednesday mornings instead of the usual grind of the reading lesson, the older scholars were allowed to peruse for pleasure The Scholar's Own, sufficient copies of the magazine being taken to enable each child to use it as an unseen reader.²⁹ A similarly enlightened approach applied to the composition lesson on Friday mornings. During this the children wrote letters to real persons, and then carefully addressed them in envelopes which their mistress provided. She was much opposed to the use of slates, which she considered noisy and inclined to encourage careless work, and where possible the children were always allowed to write on paper.

Entertainments, too, were not forgotten. St. Valentine's Day, the 14th February, was regularly celebrated by each child being given a piece of cake, an apple, and an orange. May day, too, was marked by the children parading through the village, dressed in their best attire and bearing garlands and flags. Money was collected and subsequently expended on a tea in the schoolroom.

It was equally characteristic of Mary's conscientious care that when one of her prospective pupil teachers, Edith Stevens, failed her entrance examination at Woodstock in February 1877, 'through sheer nervousness', she accompanied the girl a month later to a similar examination held in Oxford. On this occasion Edith passed with ease, and a year later both she and Mary had the satisfaction of seeing her work praised by HMI Pickard in his Parliamentary paper report for 1878. When she had completed her apprenticeship, she stayed on as an assistant mistress at Lower Heyford for a number of years.³⁰

But Mary's interest in her pupils did not cease when they left the school. She kept in touch with many of them, especially the girls, whom she sometimes helped to secure suitable positions as domestic servants. Their affection is revealed touchingly in letters which they subsequently sent to her. Kate Faggetter, for example, wrote from Woodstock on 3rd September, 1875, to 'Dear Teacher', describing her daily round as a nursemaid. She also admitted that she did 'not like Woodstock near so much as Heyford and I long to come home again to see some of my friends and playmates. On Sundays I go to chapel in the morning and to school in the afternoon . . . Dear Teacher we are having a new kitchen built and it does make me such a lot of work that I scarcely know how to do it all but I have managed in the past and I must try by the help of God to manage in the future . . . Give my kindest love to all and accept the same yourself. I remain, your loving Scholar'.³¹ Sarah Jane Cook even wrote from New

York to tell her 'dear governess' that she was enjoying her position as a maid there, and asking to be remembered 'to all of the school children'.³² There are many other letters in a similar vein.

Another sideline of Mary's during the mid-1870s lay in organising the making of a weekly supply of soup for the poor of the parish, on behalf of Mrs. Bowyer of Steeple Aston. In a letter written on 8th December, 1875, the latter expressed her appreciation of 'the kind trouble' that had been taken 'in ordering the making of my weekly Soup - which, but for your kind help I fear would have had to be discontinued'.³³

But with all her concern for the welfare of the villagers, and particularly of the children, Mary was a firm disciplinarian. According to Emily Gold, daughter of the Lower Heyford stationmaster, who attended school at the end of the 1870s, all the girls had to come neatly dressed in white pinafores. Even the mistresses wore aprons, though these were made of a sober black material. Every youngster also had a bag slung round the neck in which were stored a reading book, a geography book, and pencils. Until the school fees were abolished as a result of a government initiative in 1891, all of the pupils, save the infants who came free, had to bring their weekly pence on Monday mornings. When the register was called, they each answered to their name: 'Yes, 'm, twopence'. Until the beginning of the present century, homework was insisted upon, usually learning the tables or practising the spelling of difficult words. The books of tables used were obtained from Beecham's Pills, who issued them as an advertising venture!³⁴

Every week two of the older girls were appointed 'sweepers', and they had to stay behind when lessons were over to sweep up. In the morning they had to arrive ten minutes early, too, in order to carry out the dusting. For this they were paid 6d. per week by Mary. The boys were expected to get in the coal or coke. Later, when the local saw mills were opened, two boys with a barrow fetched a load of sawdust, which was then moistened and was spread over the schoolroom floor to keep down the dust.³⁵

Bad behaviour was firmly punished, perhaps by the child concerned losing the playtime break or being kept in at night. Caning was used only as a last resort. Quietly but firmly the mistress made it clear who was in charge of the school. This is revealed in log book entries like that for 11th April, 1873, when she recorded that a Mrs. Brock had come into school at 4.10 p.m. and had removed her son, even though he was being kept in fifteen minutes for 'whispering': 'A note was sent requesting his mother to bring him back as his time was not up & she refused to do so. Next morning he came to school as usual and was sent back with a note for his mother informing her, that her son could on no account be received without a due apology from her for her conduct the evening before. On Friday, 8 a.m. she came and apologized for what she had done and promised never to repeat the act. The boy was therefore allowed to return after a warning against all such behaviour for the future'.³⁶

Another indication of her determined approach with recalcitrant boys is shown in a letter written in May 1911 by Able Seaman Robert Wheeler on Board HMS Brilliant. He, too, had been a Lower Heyford scholar and he wrote to tell his 'Dear Late Schoolmistress' of his doings and to thank her 'for the wackings (sic) I used to get . . . for bad behaviour. For I tell you it has been the cause making me the man I am today . . . I am proud to say there as (sic) nothing been given to me to do yet since I have been an AB that I could not do and the thanks for the foundation of it all I owe to you'.³⁷

Meanwhile, on a personal front, soon after coming to the village, Mary had attracted the attention of George James Dew (1846-1928), the elder son of a long-established village family connected with the building trade. Subsequently, George was to be appointed the local poor law relieving officer and was to hold that post from 1870 until his retirement in 1923. In a diary entry written as early as 13th March, 1868, George noted of Miss Banfield that there was 'a wide spread report that we pay our addresses to each other'. On this particular evening he had taken a book of hers home '& we conversed on the report, agreeing that I should not openly visit her for the present. She gave me her Photograph'.³⁸ It is clear from surviving letters that the young couple were anxious that no hint of scandal should be attached to Mary, since this might have endangered her employment. They proceeded with extreme circumspection, often communicating with one another only by letter, in very formal terms. Mary was always addressed as Miss Banfield; only after they were married did she become Polly to him. The difficulties to which this concern for the proprieties gave rise are shown in a number of the letters - as on 16th March, 1868, when George bewailed the fact that

we are separated from all social intercourse by the eyes of those Heyford blockheads (who neither know nor care what social intercourse is) . . . Anything you want send for to me on a slip of paper inclosed in an envelope. By so doing you will deceive all the neighbours who are around you. When you have read this destroy it, or else if you should happen to drop it the asses of Heyford would have a document at once to go to work with.³⁹

The fact that the letter still exists proves that Mary did not accept his advice. On 27th March he was again noting sourly: 'Our friends talk so busily about us else I intended to give you an invitation to tea last Sunday. Their busy tongues are so hampering to me that perhaps it will be better to wait till the nine days' marvel is over'.

Over the months, however, the villagers' curiosity about the young couple abated, and their courtship lasted for almost four years. They were married at Lower Heyford church on 9th March, 1872, soon after Mary had obtained permission of the rector to continue as schoolmistress after her marriage. Following the ceremony, the Dews returned to the school-

house, where the whole of their married life was to be spent.

In his diaries, George's references to his wife often appear rather bare and unemotional, as on 23rd August, 1877, when he noted: 'Polly went by the first train for Brighton for her holiday'. But their correspondence tells a different story, and shows the deep affection he had for her. Perhaps the following teasing verse in a letter written later in August 1877, whilst she was in Sussex, indicates the closeness of their relationship:

It would be folly
To say I am jolly
When I am not.
My wife is away
All the day
But she'll come back
I dare say

Oh! so jolly, Oh!

The letter concluded with an exhortation to 'Write as often as you can. I wait anxiously for the post'.⁴⁰ A later, rather more typical letter, written on 14th September, 1892, is addressed to 'My dearly beloved Wife', 'The joy of my life'.

In running her home, Polly always had paid domestic assistance. In addition, during the mid-1870s she and George were joined by an elderly cousin of the latter's, Sarah Swift Dew, who had worked as a cook/housekeeper in a number of large establishments. She remained with them, save for brief periods of temporary employment, until her death in December 1886, at the age of 71. It may be that she, too, assisted in the household chores. By now additions had been made to the furnishing of the house and Emily Gold, who progressed from being a pupil at the school to becoming a monitor in 1886 and eventually an assistant mistress, recalled how in 1895-96 she used to fill in the weekly registers for Mrs. Dew in the latter's sitting room. Many years later she wrote: 'I can see that sitting room now, book lined - cacti plants on the window, the Edgehill cannon ball on the mantel piece, also a little bust of Shakespeare, & a picture by ... Wilkins (of Deddington), & the old harmonium in the corner, & some apples & oranges in a wire basket & a 'globe' on top of it.'⁴¹ The harmonium, incidentally, according to Mary's daughter, spent most of its time filled with books - part of her father's formidable library.

Despite the growing comfort of home life, however, Mrs. Dew's prime concern during these years was with her school. Even when she went away on holiday she would gather together items which might serve as subjects for discussion during the 'object' lessons held for the younger pupils. When her children were born she also continued to teach, staying away from her desk for a mere three or four weeks immediately after the birth. During that brief period, her sister-in-law, Ellen Dew, who was a certificated schoolmistress but living at home, took over in a temporary capacity. The Dews had two children - a son, Marten Banfield, who was

THE SCHOOL HOUSE,
LOWER HEYFORD,
BANBURY,

July 28th, 1913.

DEAR MADAM,

I have resigned my post as Head Mistress, after 46 years' work in this my only School, and shall have great pleasure in meeting you at a Social Gathering in the Schoolroom on Thursday afternoon, July 31st, 1913, at 3.30 o'clock.

I shall (p.v.) provide a Meat Tea, and hope all who are able will come and help us to spend a pleasant social evening.

After the tea there will be a small exhibition of work done by the children, and afterwards the children will dance the Maypole, and give other games.

I hope you will honour me with your company on this occasion, and that we shall have a happy time.

Believe me, dear Madam,

Yours very sincerely,

MARY DEW.

Please bring with you a plate, a knife and fork, a cup and saucer, and a tea spoon.

Letter from Mrs Dew inviting mothers to a meat tea on her retirement in 1913.

born in November 1885, and a daughter, Dorothy Banfield, who was born on 5th October, 1888. Dorothy can remember how, as a very small child, she would press against the door leading from the house to the school, and ask to be allowed in with the other children. She began school properly, as did so many children in those days, at the age of three.⁴² Miss Dew was eventually to attend the same training college as her mother and took over the headship of Lower Heyford school in July 1913, on her mother's retirement. She, too, enjoyed a long and successful stint there before transferring to the senior school at Steeple Aston in April 1939, when pupil numbers at Lower Heyford dropped.⁴³

When Mrs. Dew's retirement came, she received ample proof of the esteem in which she was held within the village. She herself invited all the mothers of past and present scholars residing in the parish to a meat tea (which the children finished off on the following day). After the meal had ended, the rector presented her with a salad bowl and servers on behalf of the current pupils and a cake dish and knife on behalf of those who had left. This was followed by Maypole dancing and singing games, whilst an exhibition was arranged in the infants' room. Later, on 20th August, she was presented with a Queen Anne silver teapot by the managers and friends of the school.

During the years of retirement that followed, Mrs. Dew continued to reside at the schoolhouse with her husband and daughter, until the former's death in 1928. He was followed three years later by their son, Marten, who had removed to Piddington after his marriage to the headmistress of the school there. Marten died at the early age of 45, after many years of ill health. His mother then lived on with her daughter until her own death on 26th October, 1936. Throughout this period she remained active in village affairs and was a churchwarden up to the time of her death.

When she died, her contribution to village school life was recognised by the local press. The Oxford Mail, for example, not only paid tribute to her academic work but went on:

even more remarkable than her strictly scholastic achievements was her influence upon the characters of her pupils. Her life and personality were a constant example of honesty and truthfulness, of quiet unassuming persistence in good work and of devotion to the welfare of others . . . To talk to Mrs. Dew in old age about Heyford and its people was an encouraging experience, for she had known the village intimately for more than 60 years, and she could appreciate the great improvements there had been in that time at once in material comfort and in sobriety in manners, in intelligence, in all that makes life more humane. The only thing of which she seemed quite unconscious was the fact that much of this improvement was due to herself.

The lot of a village teacher is uneventful and removed from the public gaze. The work of such teachers is far too

little appreciated . . . One does not usually think of the village teacher as an 'Empire Builder'. But in all parts of the Empire - in the great cities of England and in the lonely places of the most distant colonies - men and women will be found who were educated in a little village school . . . Among the many who have taken part in this great work of education, Mary Dew is one worthy to be remembered.⁴⁴

Although it may be argued that such eulogies are customary on these occasions, evidence from elsewhere indicates that in Mrs. Dew's case at least the praise was not exaggerated. In almost every way she had been a 'model' village teacher, and it is fitting that the school which she served for so long should now be known as the 'Mary Dew School'. It has a suitably inscribed plaque inserted in the wall to confirm the fact!

On a wider stage, too, it was women such as she who, quietly going about their daily duties, nonetheless helped along the feminist cause. By their efficiency and reliability they proved that women could be given responsibility and could exercise authority effectively. In this connection it is significant that Mary was an early supporter of the National Union of Elementary Teachers (later N.U.T.), established in 1870, joining the Heyford District Association of School Teachers, which was associated with the National Union, a few years after she came to Lower Heyford. Its meetings were held in the houses of members but its membership remained small, and in May 1876 it was dissolved.⁴⁵ In 1894, she joined the Oxford District of the Union, which had itself been set up thirteen years earlier, and her daughter remembers accompanying her on journeys by train to its meetings in Oxford.⁴⁶ Both economically and in terms of personal status, teaching was almost the only occupation open to women from comparatively humble homes which enabled them to rise in the world. The career of Mary Dew was a clear example of just what could be achieved by a woman of determination and character.⁴⁷

Pamela Horn

FOOTNOTES

1. See Samuel Banfield's death certificate and the Census Return for 1861 for Westmeston at the Public Record Office, R.G.9.584. Information provided by Miss D.B. Dew in notes dated 14th December, 1982, and March, 1983.
2. Notes by Miss D.B. Dew, dated March, 1983, and author's interview with Miss Dew on 29th March, 1983.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Mary Banfield's Copy Book in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS.Dew *28.
5. James Kay, secretary to the Privy Council Committee on Education from 1839 to 1849, for example, was a firm believer that the 'great aim' of education was 'the formation of character'. In 1846, he inaugurated the government's pupil teacher scheme. Malcolm Seaborne, 'Early Theories of Teacher Education' in British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol.22 (Oct. 1974), 330.
6. Notes by Miss D.B. Dew, March, 1983, and author's interview on 29th March, 1983.

7. *Ibid.* and Lower Heyford Church of England School form at the Public Record Office, ed. 7/101, dated 26th July, 1867.
8. Mary Banfield's Miscellaneous Exercise Book, commenced on 10th June, 1863, in the possession of Miss Dew.
9. Lower Heyford Church of England School form at the Public Record Office, and 'Report on Brighton Training College' in Report of the Committee of Council for 1866, P.P. 1867, Vol. XXII, 451-452.
10. Lower Heyford Church of England School form at the Public Record Office.
11. See a letter from Harriet Vincent, Mary's sister, written on 19th November, 1907, at the Bodleian Library, MS. Dew *23.
12. Copy of a letter sent by the Revd. C. Fort to the National Society in London, undated (c. 1867), in MS. D. D. Par. Lower Heyford c. 6.
13. Entry in the diary of George James Dew for 17th January, 1868. The site chosen for the parish school had previously been rented for many years by the Dew family. See entry in Dew's diary for 9th February, 1867. The diaries are preserved at the Bodleian Library.
14. Notes by Miss D. B. Dew, March, 1983, and Inventory of Furniture in the School House c. 1867 at the Bodleian Library, MS. Dew *23.
15. Notes by Miss D. B. Dew, March, 1983.
16. Quoted in Pamela Horn ed., Oxfordshire Village Life: The Diaries of George James Dew (1846-1928), Relieving Officer, (Beacon Publications, 11 Harwell Road, Sutton Courtenay, Abingdon, 1983), 8.
17. 'Mrs. Dew, Head Mistress, Lower Heyford School, Oxfordshire' in Girls' and Infants' Mistress, 12th Nov. 1898, 10. The letter from Mrs. Fort, sent on 22nd October, 1868, is in MS. Dew *23.
18. Pamela Horn ed., *op.cit.*, 72.
19. See Agreement made with Oxfordshire County Council, 20th July, 1904, in MS. Dew *24. Mrs. Dew was also paid £5 per annum to instruct a pupil teacher. See also Pamela Horn ed., *op.cit.*
20. Reminiscences of Mrs. E. A. Bacon (née Gold), n.d. c. 1967, in the possession of Miss Dew.
21. Petition from Lower Heyford Parishioners to the Revd. Henry Furneaux, dated 24th September, 1892, in MS. D. D. Par. Lower Heyford c. 8, at the Bodleian Library. Among those signing was Mary Dew's husband, George James, who was now a churchwarden. Furneaux was a considerable scholar in his own right and was a public examiner for Oxford University; in 1871, 1872, 1873, 1875 and 1876 he acted as classical examiner.
22. Letter from the Revd. Henry Furneaux, dated 27th September, 1892, in MS. D. D. Par. Local Heyford c. 8.
23. Letter from Wm. H. Piggott of Bicester to Mary Dew, dated 7th October, 1892, and from Eleanor Furneaux to Mary Dew, dated 5th February, 1894, in MS. Dew *23 in the Bodleian Library. Miss Dew remembers Mr. Piggott as a 'dapper little man', who played an active role in the NUT.
24. Oxfordshire Education Committee: Lower Heyford school records.
25. In May 1893, Mary Dew passed in Modelling drawing and perspective in the Science and Art Department's examination. She had attended a course at the Science and Art classes held in St. Ebbe's. For information on the introduction of drawing into the elementary school curriculum see Pamela Horn ed., Village Education in Nineteenth-Century Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire Record Society Vol. 51, 1979), 172-173.
26. Notes by Miss D. B. Dew, March, 1983. Miss Dew accompanied her mother to these meetings - she was aged about 12 at the time - and was able to demonstrate the exercises to the other pupils at Lower Heyford.
27. Miss D. B. Dew's interview with the author, 29th March, 1983.
28. Accounts of Miss Banfield with John Dew, ironmonger, grocer, etc., for 1870 and 1871 in MS. Dew *24. John Dew was George James's father and ran these businesses alongside his building enterprise.

29. 'Mrs. Dew, Head Mistress, Lower Heyford School, Oxfordshire' in Girls' and Infants' Mistress, 10.
30. See correspondence dated January 1890, in MS.Dew *23. Pamela Horn ed., Oxfordshire Village Life, 68, 69 and 93.
31. Letter from Kate Faggetter to Mary Dew, dated 3rd September, 1875, in MS.Dew *24.
32. Letter from Sarah Jane Cook, New York, to Mary Dew, dated 23rd January, but with no year given, in MS.Dew *24.
33. Letter from Mrs. L.A. Bowyer, written from Stoke Park, Towcester, on 8th December, 1875, in MS.Dew *23.
34. Miss D.B. Dew's interview with the author, 29th March, 1983. Mrs. E.A. Bacon's reminiscences.
35. Notes by Miss D.B. Dew, March, 1983.
36. Entry in school log book in the possession of Miss D.B. Dew, who has kindly allowed me to consult it.
37. Letter from Robert Wheeler AB to Mary Dew, dated 8th May, 1911, in MS.Dew *23.
38. Quoted in Pamela Horn ed., Oxfordshire Village Life, 9.
39. Letter from George James Dew to Mary Banfield in MS.Dew *23.
40. Letter from George James Dew to Mary Dew, 25th August, 1877, in MS.Dew *23.
41. Reminiscences of Mrs. E.A. Bacon, c.1967, in the possession of Miss Dew.
42. Miss Dew's interview with the author, 29th March, 1983.
43. Entry in Lower Heyford School Log Book for 21st April, 1939, and Miss Dew's interview with the author on 14th December, 1982.
44. Bicester Advertiser, 6th November, 1936, quoting from the Oxford Mail.
45. Pamela Horn ed., Oxfordshire Village Life, 65.
46. Miss Dew's interview with the author, 29th March, 1983. Miss Dew also owns a copy of the Oxford District Teachers' Association objects and terms of membership, etc. This notes that the Association had been formed at a meeting held in St. Giles' School-room, Oxford on 29th October, 1881, its object being 'to combine into one body - for Code purposes chiefly - the Teachers of Elementary Schools generally in the county of Oxon, and now under the Inspectorship of the Rev. H.A. Pickard, HMI'.
47. Even when she retired, Mrs. Dew secured a pension of £32. 12s. 2d., plus £2 16s. 4d. annuity; her total income at that stage (c.1919) was £43 8s. 6d., according to a note in the possession of her daughter. Throughout her married life, therefore, Mrs. Dew had an independent income, something which relatively few women enjoyed in those days.

BOOK REVIEW

OXFORDSHIRE VILLAGE LIFE: the Diaries of George James Dew (1846-1928), Relieving Officer.

Edited by Pamela Horn. Beacon Publications 1983. Price £3.00
(Copies, post-free if prepaid, may be obtained from Beacon Publications,
11 Harwell Road, Sutton Courtenay, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4BN).

The diaries of George James Dew, now preserved in the Bodleian Library, are unique in being the only ones known to have been written by a relieving officer. As such they have enormous value to the local historian, and the extracts from the 1870s published here contain fascinating insights into life in rural Oxfordshire.

In her introduction Pamela Horn outlines George Dew's background and family, setting him into the context of Oxfordshire village life. His

father ran a builder's business, including carpentry and blacksmithing. George himself was apprenticed as a carpenter, but he did not find the work very congenial and was obviously very glad to be able to take on his subsequent occupations. During the 1870s he took on the varied duties of poor relief officer, poor and church rate collector, Inspector of Nuisances for the district sanitary authority, school attendance officer, vaccination officer to register smallpox vaccinations, and he also had responsibility for reporting on the health and welfare of pauper children. These duties gave him ample opportunity for travelling round the district and noting local conditions.

He began writing his diary in 1862 at the age of 15, but apparently the early years (not here published) are largely concerned with family affairs. Despite the slightly misleading title of the book, the only years here published are 1870-1879, although the diaries continue until George Dew's death in 1928, albeit in a less detailed way. Even the entries for the 1870s have been substantially edited, which is perhaps a shame. It whets one's appetite to know what sort of information, apart from detailed notes about the weather, have been omitted, and to want to know the criteria for choosing what has been used, as not every reader will have easy access to the originals in the Bodleian Library.

Right from the start, George Dew obviously hoped that his diaries would form a useful record for the future:

"1870, September 30th. Here ends the VIIth volume of my Diary, in the 7th year of its keeping. Long may it survive if of any future service."

This is very typical of his attitude to life, and to the preservation of information. He was a great collector of everything from Roman artefacts picked up from the Roman town of Alchester, near Bicester, to family relics such as a straw mill used by one of his ancestors in the 1830s for making her straw bonnet. Many of these multifarious items are accompanied by meticulous labels which give information about their history and origins. The bulk of his vast collection is now housed, through the generosity of his daughter, Miss D.B. Dew, who has herself documented some of the collection, in the Oxfordshire County Museum and the Bodleian Library. An exhibition about George Dew, based on his collection, is at present touring Oxfordshire museums.

The material which is included in this edition of the diaries is both fascinating and varied, highlighting aspects of rural life in the 1870s which are now often forgotten. When George Dew first became relieving officer, much of his travelling had to be done by hitching rides on bakers' carts, which cannot have been very convenient. It is interesting to note how much use he made of the train service, often doing short journeys to Oxford or Banbury - in fact at one time he had very much wanted to be a station master. The train service obviously filled the place now usurped by the local bus service. However, new methods of transport were gradually becoming available - he was not averse to experimenting with the

new-fangled bicycle:

1871 May 12th. "I first learned to ride a bicycle on Wednesday. No person who had not tried to ride one can imagine how difficult it is at first to preserve the balance ... I never saw one till about 12 or 18 months ago, and now there are several in Heyford..."

He was obviously so much impressed by the bicycle that the following month he purchased his own:

June 8th. "Went to Banbury by the mid-day train. Bought of Mr. Lampitt at his Foundry at Neithrop a Bicycle, the price of which is to be £5 5s 0d less 10% = £4 14s 6d."

The acquisition of a bicycle made his travelling much easier, and he thought nothing of cycling over 20 miles a day.

The diary emphasizes the poverty in the countryside, and the great need for poor relief. The system was strict, and some paupers were offered no alternative but the dreaded workhouse, which was frequently refused until the very last moment. There are a number of references to the emigration of agricultural workers, who often raised the money for their fares to the American or Australian continents by public subscription. Other references indicate that those who remained behind were beginning to try to improve their conditions by forming and joining the new agricultural trades union.

Many traditional aspects of life in the countryside feature in the diaries - although one would often love further details about them. George Dew writes about the celebration of May Day by the children of Lower Heyford, and the decline of the Kirtlington Lamb Ale. Fairs obviously had a far more important role than today. They were important for trading, and George Dew himself bought a pony from a drove brought across from Wales and sold at Bicester Fair.

The diaries are full of such fascinating snippets and are well worth reading. Although not as detailed as Flora Thompson's "Lark Rise to Candleford", which was based on the north Oxfordshire of the 1880s, the diaries provide a sober and incisive complement indicating the vast changes taking place in the countryside in the latter part of the 19th century.

Christine Bloxham

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 many volumes in the record series. 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. Tanned 1841-1860; South Newington Churchwardens' Accounts 1553-1684; Vigginton Constables' Books 1691-1836; Bodicote Parish Accounts 1700-1822; and Victorian Banbury** by Barrie Trinder. 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 £8.00 including any records volumes published, or £5.00 if these are excluded.

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

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