

CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President:

The Lord Saye and Sele.

Chairman:

Brian Little, 12 Longfellow Road, Banbury OX16 9LB
(tel. 01295 264972)

Cake and Cockhorse Editorial Committee

J P Bowes, Midhill, Horley, Banbury OX15 6BD (tel 01295 730375),
Nan Clifton, Jeremy Gibson

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8 Horsefair,
Banbury OX16 0AA
(tel 01295 259855).

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Hon. Research Adviser:

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(tel 01993 882982)

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Banbury, Oxon OX16 0AA

**Details of the Society's activities and
publications will be found inside the back cover.**

Cake and Cockhorse

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

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A new volume and new editors - but some things don't change. The seasons extend as ever, but even the mild weather hardly excuses an 'Autumn' issue just before Christmas - you must just blame it on other editorial commitments, such as a sudden visit to Los Angeles for a week. However, it does add relevance to our first article, by the ever-helpful Christine Bloxham, on Christmas mummers.

In the Spring Eric Kaye and David Neal recalled what was happening in the Banbury area just before D-Day, fifty years ago. In this issue we are reminded how World War 2 and earlier wars and disturbances affected those who had lived in or near Banbury but were in the armed forces, in particular our own local regiment, the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars and its off-shoots, and, in very different style, how one of our present members coped with army life. This year has been the bicentenary of the Yeomanry and the 80th anniversary of the Q.O.O.H. being the first Yeomanry Regiment to arrive on the Western Front in 1914. The 251 (Banbury) Battery sailed for Singapore in 1941, were captured and remained PoWs until August 1945. The remaining three Batteries, including Banbury's 2nd Battery (252), although not part of the 1944 D-Day landings, arrived in Dieppe some months later as part of the British Liberation Army.

In less martial vein, Michael Hoadley visits some local (and not so local) pubs (no expenses granted by the Society!), a pugilist is revealed as being far more than just a bruiser, and those in the Banbury locality have opportunities for research greatly widened. There's no longer the excuse that you can't get to the records - they have come to you, so let's hope more readers will do their own thing and write up a topic for *Cake & Cockhorse* - we look forward to hearing from you!

J.S.W.G.

“HERE COMES I...”

Christine Bloxham

“Here comes I. Old Father Christmas, welcome or welcome not.
I hope old Father Christmas will never be forgot
There is a time for work, and there is a time for play
A time for to be melancholy, and for to be gay
A time for to be thrifty and a time for to be free
But, sure enough, at Christmas tide we all may jovial be
This is the time when Christ did come that we might happy be
So listen, all ye gentles, to what we now shall say,
And take in kindness what we do to celebrate this day
St George, the Doctor and the Turk are here together met,
The doctor has his physic and the knights' swords are sharp set,
The one will kill the other and the Doctor raise him up,
And then we all shall happy be with each his Christmas cup
And Robin Hood and Little John will pass the beer-pot round,
For two more jolly chaps on earth there never yet were found
So ladies all and gentlemen we pray you give good cheer
To Old Father Christmas, for he comes but once a year!”

With this speech Father Christmas introduces the Bampton mummers' play, as recorded by J A Giles in 1847. Mummers' plays are one of the delights of the Christmas season, being performed regularly at Abingdon, Bampton and Headington, usually by the same group of people who make up the morris men, also at Wheatley and some other villages. The plays have been performed for many centuries, but their origins are uncertain, as the words of the play were passed down by word of mouth over many generations, and the earliest written Oxfordshire version, that of Islip, only dates from 1780. Most versions now performed have changed greatly over the centuries, many words having been lost and others changed, as the agricultural labourers and craftsmen who performed them did not always understand their meaning - for example at Headington the 'Turkish Knight' became a 'Turkey Snite'.

As Father Christmas explained, the plays have a theme of death and resurrection, the hero, here King George, from the Kirtlington version, enters, and declaims defiantly

“In comes I, King George,
The man of courage bold,
With my sword in hand
I won ten thousand pounds in gold

Ara man henters this door,
I'll cut 'im down with my created hand
I'll cut 'im as small as dust,
Send him to make mince pie crust ”

His enemy, usually the Turkish Knight, Bold Slasher, or as here at Kirtlington, a French Officer, replies

“In comes I, the Jolly Frenchman,
The Jolly Frenchman am I
Where is that man that bid me stand
Said he'd cut me with his created hand
So an I'm come to face my foe,
To give this man the created blow
So cock up your sword, an keep guard on yer eye,
Else down in this house, you'll very soon lie ”

The two fight, and one, at Kirtlington King George, falls, so the Frenchman calls for the Doctor, who offers miraculous cures (this one taken from the Glympton play)

“I be the nawble doctor good
An' wi' my skill, I'll stop his blood
My vee's ten pound, but awnly vive,
If I don't raise this man alive
[feels his pulse, shakes his leg and then says]
This man be not quite dead, see how his leg shakes
An I've got the pills as cure all ills
The itch, the stitch, the palsy and gout paains,
Paains athin an paains athout,
An' any awld ooman dead seven year
If she got one tooth left to crack one of these, yer
[holds up the box, shakes it to rattle the pills, finally opens it, takes out a large one and stuffs it into King George's mouth saying]
Rise up King Gaarge and vite agaain
An' see which on e vust is slain ”

He brings King George back to life, then in this case there is another fight and the French Officer is slain, only to be cured by Jack Vinney, then a comic character called Happy Jack comes on

“I be poor auld Happy Jack, my wife and family at my back.
Out o' nine I yent but vive, an' hafe o' they be sturved alive
Roast be-uf, plum pudden and mince pie,
Who likes them better'n I ”

He is followed by Beezelebob, then they all dance round and collect money from the audience

At one time almost every village had its own version of the play, and the characters varied enormously. At Deddington in the 1930s the mummers came round on Boxing Day, collecting latterly for local charities. They incorporated songs such as 'My Grandfather's Clock', but still dressed in costumes including ribboned top hats and flannel trousers which replaced the more traditional rag costumes. One character with a black face was originally Beezelebob or perhaps Old Mother Wallopsee, according to local informants. At Chipping Norton the characters included St George, the Turkish Knight, Little Jumping Jack (who wore balloons on his back) and the Doctor, who drew a clothes peg tooth from the Turkish Knight.

At Burford, because of the midsummer dragon procession, the dragon featured in the play as one of the protagonists. A version described as being from Oxfordshire included King Alfred and his Queen, King William, Old King Cole (with a wooden leg), Giant Blunderbore, Little Jack, Old Father Christmas, a dragon, the Merry Andrew, Old Doctor Ball and morris men. Robin Hood and Little John appear again in the version from Shipton-under-Wychwood and Bloxham is known to have had Robin Hood plays. The eighteenth century Islip version has Anno Domini, a man dressed as a woman (an idea dating back at least to Shakespeare's time when women were not allowed to appear on stage), a Pedlar Knave, Old Doctor Spinney, Salt Peter, Old Fat Jack, Old Father Christmas, the Royal Duke of Blunderland, Earl or King Percy and a Herald.

Often the same role was handed down in the same family from generation to generation. Costumes varied - some, like the Abingdon mummers today, wore paper costumes, now based on ordinary overalls, decorated with hundreds of strips of paper. Different coloured crepe paper is used to differentiate the characters - red for Father Christmas, blue for St George, green for the Turkish Knight, pink for 'Mollie', while the Doctor is dressed in a suit with top hat as a 'Harley Street doctor'. At Long Hanborough the men used to go round before Christmas begging for newspaper to make their costumes. In some places theatrical type costumes were used. Faces were frequently blacked, as it used to be considered vital that the performers were not recognised.

Although most mummers' plays died out around the turn of the century, several are performed each year in Oxfordshire, with great gusto and enjoyment - a treat not to be missed.

Note For earlier *Cake & Cockhorse* articles, see 'Mumming and Niggering in Bloxham', by Yvonne Huntriss (7 7, Autumn 1978, pp 219-24), and 'Morris Dancing in the Banbury Region', by Keith Chandler (8 5, Spring 1981, pp 146-50).

THE YEAR OF THE YEOMANRY 1794 - 1994

T. E. Nicholls

This year 1994 is the 200th anniversary of the Act of Parliament embodying the Yeomanry Troops of Yeomanry were originally raised in most of the counties of the United Kingdom from 1794 onwards and over the course of the ensuing years formed into regiments of territorial cavalry. Many of those regiments or their successors, having survived successive defence cuts, now form an important part of today's Territorial Army. In the South African War and the two World Wars the Yeomanry Regiments fought initially as cavalry, mounted riflemen and dismounted troops, later they served with notable success as armoured reconnaissance, artillery and signal regiments. Although its character has changed over the course of the twentieth century, the Yeomanry still reflects British society at large, and maintains a distinctive presence as part of the modern day Territorial Army.

Today, Yeomanry squadrons serve in the Royal Armoured Corps, the Royal Artillery, the Royal Signals, the Royal Engineers, the Logistics Corps and the infantry. Squadrons exist in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and throughout England.

The Oxfordshire Yeomanry (the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars), known also by their nick-name as 'Queer Objects On Horseback' owes its origin to the Watlington Troop (May 1798) quickly followed by the Bullington, Dorchester and Thame Troop, third was the Oxford or Wootton Troop and fourth, the Bloxham and Banbury Troop. All date from 1798, each about fifty strong, independent units, armed with swords and pistols.

For fifteen years after the battle of Waterloo, the yeomanry were chiefly employed in the preservation of order at home. Then as now, peace after long wars was full of troubles, and there was much rioting, owing to bad trade, high taxes, high prices and other causes. Sir John Fortescue says "Little though the fact is recognised, England, owes much to the yeomanry during the first trying years of peace. The temper of the nation was certainly menacing, not without reason, and it found vent in repeated acts of violence. The troops were in request in all quarters of Great Britain, and the Commander-in-Chief had not a single battalion to spare. It seems in fact to be no more than the truth that, but for the yeomanry, the trouble would have been very serious indeed, it was they who stood between the country and insurrection" (*History of the British Army*, xi, 43, 57, 85).

The Oxfordshire Yeomanry did their share in this duty. One such incident was in 1800, during the 'Agricultural Riots' of that period local agricultural labourers

went on the rampage, destroying 'new-fangled' farming machinery etc The craftsmen and tradesmen of Banbury became involved, perhaps due to the high rates and taxes Some boys started a fire at Neithrop On hearing the firebells and the general noise, the local inhabitants were soon on the scene Captain Thomas Cobb, who commanded the Bloxham/Banbury troop (1798-1803), was called on for assistance On arrival the troop was attacked with sticks, stones, and long wooden poles which were set alight and thrust at the horses The Yeomanry decided to retreat on this occasion!

In October 1835, Queen Adelaide visited Oxford, and guards of honour were furnished by the county yeomanry, which was now given the title of "Queen's Own Royal Oxfordshire Yeomanry Cavalry" (The word 'Royal' dropped out of the title before 1855) The Regiment's title was to change a number of times in the course of its history

During the period 1899-1901, the Regiment provided the 40th Company of the 10th Battalion and the 59th Company of the 15th Battalion, The Imperial Yeomanry, for the South African War The Regiment took part in the successful attack on the Boer position at Dreifontein, in which Cecil Boyd, Captain of the Banbury troop, was killed He was the first yeomanry officer ever killed in action A memorial plaque recording his death is in St. Mary's Church, Banbury.

Pre-1914 officers included the 9th Duke of Marlborough, the 1st Viscount Churchill, Lord Camoys, the Rt Hon Winston Churchill, Major Jack Churchill, Sir Eustace Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes, the Hon Geoffrey Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes, the Hon Arthur Villiers, and the 19th Baron Saye and Sele.

80 Years ago: At the outbreak of the 1914-18 War, the Regiment had four squadrons, subsequently reduced to three They were as follows:-

HQ Squadron -	Regimental C O Lt Colonel Arthur Dugdale
	2 i/c Major Hon E E Twistleton-Wykeham-Fiennes
	Adj Capt Guy Bonham-Carter (19th Lancers)
	R S M Mr J L Goldie (3rd Hussars)
A Squadron Oxford	O C Capt J W Scott
B " Woodstock	Officers and Men distributed between the others
C " Henley	O C Major C R Nicholl
D " Banbury	O C Major J S S. Churchill

On the morning of Tuesday, 4th August 1914, the officers and men of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry were scattered about the country, engaged for the most part in their ordinary peacetime occupations Some few were at work in the city offices in London, others, more numerous, were attending to their shops and businesses in the country, but the great majority would have been found at work on the farm No one doubted that if we went to war, the whole Territorial Force would be immediately called up The order to mobilise reached Headquarters at 6pm, on 4th August, and was immediately repeated to every officer and man on the strength A few enthusiasts joined up late at night, but the great majority

received orders too late, or lived too far from their mobilisation centre, to report for duty till the next day

Wednesday, 5th August, was a pouring wet morning when the earliest comers began to arrive at about 7am. By 8 30am, some forty men had arrived at 'D' Squadron Headquarters, Banbury, and were rapidly being sworn in and put through their medical examination. During the next six days mobilisation proceeded apace at Oxford, Henley and Banbury, strength being made up, horses delivered, and stores obtained. On Monday, 10th August, 'D' Squadron was able to have its first mounted parade, marching from Banbury to Wroxton and drilling there. On the 11th, 'D' Squadron paraded at Banbury Cross at 9 30pm, and marched to the G W R station amid cheers from the townspeople. Although there was no conceivable likelihood of our meeting the enemy for many long months - many credulous people said "never" - it was a memorable moment for those who left Banbury that night, none knowing when or in what circumstances they might return. But any feelings of sentiment or romance were quickly dispelled on reaching the station, where a scene of much bustle and activity took place. The process of entraining some 150 horses, all quite unused to such adventures, in the dark, and in the rather inadequate sidings not constructed to deal with such large numbers, occupied nearly two hours and entailed a good deal of shouting by officers and sergeants and much perspiration by the men. However, at last the most unwilling horse was safely in his box, and they steamed out of Banbury at 11 30pm arriving at Reading at 12 55am.

On 16th September, Marshall Joffre had telegraphed Lord Kitchener asking for Marines, to co-operate with French troops in the neighbourhood of Dunkirk, and Mr Churchill had agreed to send them if he could have some Yeomanry to act as divisional cavalry. The War Office refused to part with a whole Brigade, but agreed to send a regiment, and orders were issued for the Oxfordshire Yeomanry to embark for service overseas. They were the first Yeomanry regiment to arrive in France, and came under the direct orders of the Royal Navy Division. Private Sheasby, of Banbury, was the first casualty. The Regiment suffered many casualties during the years that followed and won many awards. They alone of the Yeomanry Regiments which fought in France retained their horses and served in a cavalry division from 1914-1919, returning to England in May 1919, and dispersed to civilian life.

The King was graciously pleased to approve the appointment of Her Majesty Queen Mary as Colonel-in-Chief of the Regiment on 25th March 1919. On 31st March 1922 the Regiment was finally disbanded, and ceased to exist as a military unit.

Two batteries of field artillery were raised by slow degrees and united with two Worcestershire batteries to form the 100th (Worcestershire and Oxfordshire Yeomanry) brigade, R F A. Major Muirhead was appointed to command one of the two Oxfordshire batteries and Major Adrian Keith-Falconer commanded the second battery (Banbury). The batteries take their name and badge from the old

Regiment. But the batteries were mainly recruited from the towns, and from necessity developed a new spirit and set of traditions very different from that of the old yeomanry cavalry

Mr Harry Bennett of Broughton recalls, "My first impressions of the drill-hall in the Oxford Road were of a large converted thatch-roofed bar, with the Quartermaster's store attached at one end. On leaving the 'barn', one came to the Training Room with a miniature artillery range at one end, and where there was a system of ropes and cords attached to 'make-believe' shells, and after the order was given to FIRE! a puff of smoke appeared on the target. I thought this was very clever. Next to the Artillery Room, came the Lecture and Games Room, complete with 'Bar'. There was a full sized billiard table, table-tennis, card-table, shove-Ha'penny, Darts and other games facilities. The P.S.I. was in charge of the games and the Quartermaster in charge of the Bar. Outside at that time were the toilets. There was no large building such as was built in 1938."

In between WW1 and WW2, it was standard practice for the Territorial Army to proceed on a fortnight's camp. For the Oxfordshire Yeomanry, this meant that one year would be termed a 'Firing' camp followed next year by a 'Holiday' camp. (Upon the re-forming of the T.A. after WW2, the annual camps were all 'firing' camps, due no doubt to there being a surplus of shells etc. left over from the recent war.) These camps were usually held at such places as: Larkhill, Wilts, Okehampton, Devon, East Chickerel, Dorset, etc. "The first camp that I attended", recalls Mr Frank Miles, "was in 1926 but unfortunately, owing to the problems arising from the General Strike, our original destination was cancelled, so instead it was held in grounds of Wroxton Abbey. We furnished 'Guards' and other duties (some with fixed bayonets), on such places as Banbury Railway Station."

Members of the Banbury Battery attended several Royal Duties. King George V's funeral, King George VI's Coronation and (post-war) his funeral. In 1938, the drill-hall was modernised, with a large extension built on to the old barn. There was now a large drill shed, offices, bar, and toilet facilities all under one roof. The new building was used for sport too. We had a team in the local football league. This meant that, when we played at home, we could provide to the away team a hot shower bath after the game (a luxury) and a mug of hot tea, for one penny! The drill-hall was kept open during the day and any unemployed members could make use of the aforementioned facilities. We were seldom short of new members, thanks to our worthy and thoughtful Q'Master. The annual bounty was 30s, providing a minimum number of drills had been completed (attendances). The Medical Officer for the Regiment was Captain (Doctor) T.F. Briggs, R.A.M.C., T.A., the Banbury medical practitioner of the Horsefair.

In 1938/9, the strength was doubled and two Regiments resulted, i.e. 53rd (Worcestershire Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A. (T.A.) and 63rd (Oxfordshire Yeomanry) Anti-Tank Regiment, R.A. (T.A.S.). The 53rd Regiment was first-line and went to France and fought bravely, before Dunkirk,

while the 63rd was second line and put into the 61st Division. The 63rd A/Tank Regiment was mobilised in September 1939. The 2nd Lord Birkenhead, in the Yeomanry in WW2, was taken by his Godfather, Winston Churchill, for a Staff-Job, the organising of Central European Activities. Winston called up Bill Deakin from the Oxfordshire Yeomanry to join Tito. Winston has arranged for Bill Deakin to be commissioned pre-war although officially there was no vacancy available for him. Bill had helped Winston with his research on Marlborough, Bill was a history scholar at Christ Church and was introduced by Professor F A Lindeman (Lord Cherwell).

In October 1939, 251 and 252 (Banbury) Batteries were billeted in Church House, Horsefair, for a few weeks, then moved to Bicester Aerodrome for a spell of 'On-Guard', where the prototype of the Halifax Bomber was supposedly being built. It was Top Secret. One battery, 252, returned to Banbury for the Christmas (when the war supposed to be over!), then early in 1940, marched to and were stationed in the Kineton area, 252 were billeted in Woodley House, the home of Lord Willoughby de Broke. "We were in the stables," says Len Shaw. The other batteries were in Walton Hall, Wellesbourne.

Len Shaw continues "Nothing much happened, usual routine stuff, until we were sent post-haste to 'defend' the South Coast - with instructions to hold a line from Southampton to Portsmouth. 252 Battery at Southsea and Port Fareham, the remainder of the lads spread along the coast." It was at the time of the evacuation from Dunkirk. The next move was to Port Meadow, under canvas, where it appeared to rain constantly. Marching Orders received, the Regiment sailed from Stranraer, Scotland, aboard the *SS Daffodil*, she had been involved with evacuation and still had the bullet holes in her funnels to prove it. Our destination was Lisburn, Northern Ireland, where we were to remain for some considerable time.

Ben Pritchett's story:

I was promoted to B.S.M. and was transferred from 250 (Oxford) Battery to 251 (Banbury), the Battery Commander was Major J. Turrill. Shortly after, on 27th September 1941, 251 Battery, having been selected, was given its posting instructions to depart from the Regiment and set sail for England! - to Butlin's Holiday Camp, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex. There we were kitted out (Tropical), and helped form the 85th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA, *but* we still retained our title (251 Battery Oxfordshire Yeomanry). Shortly afterwards it was Glasgow, and at Greenock on the Clyde we embarked on the *SS Narkunda* bound for so we believed - Basra, Iraq. We sailed across the Atlantic nearly to Newfoundland - to avoid enemy submarines - but were not always successful in that respect. The 'Depth-charges' were quite nerve-racking and a very worrying experience for all on board. After travelling westward for some time, our course altered to a more south-easterly one, towards Freetown and Durban, South Africa. On deck in Durban, we read - in clear - from our escort ship, *Royal Sovereign*, the

following. 'SS NARKUNDA, HAVE YOU THE NECESSARY CHARTS FOR PASSAGE TO SINGAPORE VIA SUNDRA AND BANKA STRAITS?' The answer must have been 'Yes' and so our fate was sealed

We arrived at Singapore on January 13th, 1942 to a Jap reception of twenty-one Zeros overhead. The *Empress of Asia*, which had over two thousand troops on board, was destined to be sunk by Zeros, just off Singapore. A number of small boats belonging to less damaged ships were able to be of great assistance and took off more than a thousand troops, and the Australian sloop *Yarra*, which managed to come alongside aft, was able to take off more than a hundred, including the crew

We, 251 Battery, became part of the 11th Indian Division and billeted with DO6 R.A. Regiment at Birdwood Camp. A few days later we were hurriedly moved up into Malaya, and went 'into action' alongside the Ghurkas. We got up as far as Potian Kechi. There was just *one* aircraft in Singapore, which was a Brewster Buffalo. There were *no* Naval vessels. *HMS Repulse* and *HMS Prince of Wales* had both been sunk. So, if we held a line, the Japs - nipped (what a word) round us. We were close to the coast. Gradually we were being forced back to Singapore, back to the Chinese Cemetery, Halifax Road. We took some very heavy shelling there and air-raids were frequent. Captain Greville and I carried out frequent visits - night and day - to the Battery outposts, and we got to know each other very well under those conditions. Our Battery HQ was in a bungalow near the cemetery, and on 15th February '42, the Battery Commander, Major Turrill walked towards me and said, "It's all over, Sergeant Major." I turned back and he went on to say, "All units in South East Asian Command have been ordered *to lay down their arms*." There were tears in his eyes as he uttered those words. As for me, I was too surprised to shed any at that time. Nothing like this had been remotely expected.

The Japs arrived the next day. Captain Greville and Lieutenant Hatchett went to the docks to try an escape, they were never seen again (years later, I found their names on a memorial, 'Missing, believed killed'). To continue, I took my motor-bike to try an escape, but it was chaotic and hopeless. I told Major Turrill where I had been and he asked me to guide the Battery down, which I did but not on my m/c. It really was quite hopeless and we spent the night outside Raffles Hotel! The next day we were marched to Changi, the River Valley Camp in Singapore. At first we were put to work in the docks later we were moved - in cattle trucks - to Thailand. Why? to build *the Railway!*

I shall gloss over our time in Thailand, as the cruelty and degradation perpetrated by our Japanese captors has already been well documented. Perhaps with help of the diary (opposite) and a map of the areas mentioned therein, the reader will discover for himself just a little of the existence that was imposed upon us.

However, I feel I must mention a letter from the officers of 251 Battery just before they were taken away to their own camps, dated 27th September 1943

SINGAPORE JAN. 13. 1942.

BIRDWOOD CAMP. N ACTION
JOHORE BARU. N ACTION
PONTIAN KECH. N ACTION
PONTIAN BESAR. N ACTION
PAYA LEBAR. N ACTION
KAMPONG WOODLEY
HALIFAX RD
CEMETRY RETURN
FEB. 15 '44

CHANGI P.O.W.
RIVER VALLEY RD
CAMP

OCT 12. 1942.
BY RAIL.

SINGAPORE
JOHORE BARU
KUALA LUMPUR
1204

PRAI (PENANG).
THAI BORDER
BANPONG.

MARCH BEGINS
OCT 16³ 1942

BANPONG
TAMUAN
KANCHANBURI
TERATAH
TARDAN
TARSOE
TONCHIAN
135 KILO'S

BUILDING
ANY
THINGS

OCT 23. 1942

SEPT 1943
KINTIH.

DECEMBER '44

TARSOE

AMOEBI

DYSENTRY

EVACUATED.

APRIL 1944

NAKOM PATON

JAN. 1945
NAKOM PATON
TO
TAMUAN.

TAMAKAND.
TAMUAN.

APRIL 2. 1945
BY RAIL.

NON PRADAK
NAKOM PATON
NAKOM PRESSIAN
BANGKOK
NAKOM NAI.

MARCH BEGINS
JUNE 3rd

NAKOM NAI
SARA BURI
LOPBURI
BANMEI
NAKOM SAI
RAHENG

PISNALOKE

ARRIVED
AUG 19th 1945

650 KILO
FROM

NAKOM NAI
WAR ENDS

THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD
AS WE THAT ARE LEFT
GROW OLD

AGE SHALL NOT WEAR THEM
OF THE YEARS COME FROM

AT THE GOING DOWN
OF THE SUN

AND IN THE MORNING

WE WILL REMEMBER THE

251 RTV
25th Battery
85th A/T Coy
1959

85. M. A. A. P. P. H. H.

200 of you of 85

London THAILAND

Sept. 27th 1943.

Dear Sgt. Major.

To-day is the second anniversary of our departure from Ireland and from our own Regt. and we should like you to give those of 251 who with us our congratulations on their excellent behavior & spirit during two most difficult & hard years & our hopes that the coming year will see the Battery together in London.

Next year perhaps we shall be able to entertain the Battery in the way they deserve but meanwhile as a very small token of our regard we send you £600 (DOLLARS) & shall be glad if you will give 50c to each of 251 Bty in this camp with our best wishes for the future.

We are sure that many of us cannot help those others of the Battery who are scattered up

with them wherever they are.

To conclude we thank you for two years good service to the Battery in battle & afterwards.

Yours very sincerely,

John Timmins Major R.A.

Walter Osborn.

W. R.A.

Duncker 210.

Tonchan, Thailand.
Sept, 27th 1943.

B.S.M. A.B.PRITCHETT,
251 Oxf.Yeo A/Tk Bty.

Dear Sgt.Major,

To-day is the second anniversary of our departure from Ireland and from our own Regt. and we should like you to give those of 251 still with us our congratulations on their excellent behaviour & spirits during two most difficult & hard years & our hopes that the coming year will see the Battery together in freedom.

Next year perhaps we shall be able to entertain the Battery in the way they deserve but meanwhile as a very small token of our regard we send you TC 6.00 & shall be glad if you will give 50c to each of 251 Bty in this camp with our best wishes for the future.

We are more than sorry that we cannot help those others of the Battery who are scattered up & down the river but our Wishes for their health & good fortune are, as I am sure all yours' are with them wherever they are

To conclude we thank you for two years good service to the Battery, in battle & afterwards.

Yours very sincerely

Signatures. (JOHN TURRILL.....Major.R.A.
(LEWIS OSBOURNE...Lieutenant.R.A.
(FRANK HOBBS.....Lt. R.A.
(D. MCKENZIE.....Lt. R.A.



All the men
in picture-
members of,
251 Battery
(BANBURY) .

Taken in the
early days -
of captivity
(We didn't
have as much
-meat on us
-later).....

(see pages 12-13) A little explanation won't come amiss to those not familiar with the conditions of our miserable existence. The six dollars or TCs (Thai) meant quite a lot to the officers, and the fifty cents for each of the lads would buy for them - ONE duck egg. There were twelve men from 251 Battery in the camp at that time, out of the hundred (approx) from the Battery who were POWs in Tarsoe We had been split up and dispersed to other camps The four signatures of the officers in the letter were Major Turrill, Lieutenants Hobbs, Osbourne and McKenzie The rest of the officers were with other groups I was now left as 'Camp Commandant'

So the years dragged on, our plight got worse, though on looking at my AB64 (YES, I've still got it!), I came across the following. "If we are not freed by August 1st, 1943, I pay BSM Pritchett £5 signed I Reed, and witnessed by G Williams " A later note reads somewhat ironically "I won the bet "

1942 - 1943 - 1944 - how those years dragged by! 1945 arrived and after another march - this one starting Nakomnai and ending at Pitsanuloke, a distance of 650 kilometres, arriving August 19th, 1945, we flew - from there to Rangoon

The War ends - so does Captivity.

The copies of various documents accompanying this text will, I hope, tell the reader so much more than I could possibly put into words, now fifty or so years later

A few random notes. I was 'demobbed' on 19th March 1946, at No 5 O C Depot, R A O C , Taunton, Somerset. I received a small pension for the following.

1 Malnutrition and Privation with Renal Calculus (Pyelolithotomy)

2 Dysentery

3 Helicuiltiasiasis Stronglyoides

While still a PoW, I received the following inoculations

(B Pestis), 1st Buboic, 5 2 43, 2nd Bubonic 14 2.43, Cholera, 22 3 43 M O , I D Lodge

Soldier's Release Book, Class A. Military Dispersal Unit, No. 1, Taunton, issued for the following

W/O II B S M 793752 PRITCHETT, A B (ex-PoW Far East)

Military Conduct - 'Exemplary '

Testimonial: 'This man has been a warrant officer for 4½ years He has good powers of command and is an able administrator He is thoroughly trustworthy and under difficult conditions has proved himself a man of much courage and character

Signed Capt R A '

I feel justly proud.

Ben Pritchett's story is but one of several of those who survived and returned home What of the others? Two believed killed trying to escape, one killed.

mortar wounds, one believed drowned, four killed following an air-raid, one died from dysentery, and twelve others, died in captivity (no known details)

The above information was taken from the Nominal Roll of the 85th A/Tk Regt R A , original copy still surviving 251 Battery (Oxf-Yeo) was one of the four batteries in the Regiment The above casualty list may not be complete, but even so it is nearly 25 per cent of the Battery's strength For the remainder of the Regiment, the casualty figure is much lower, about ten per cent

After the fall of Singapore, the British POWs, with other nationalities, were moved to many other areas. Thailand, Burma, Japan etc

Amazingly, when the Yeomanry re-formed after the War, some ex-POWs decided to rejoin!

Commanding the regiment during the period 1942-1944 was Lt Col. J Thompson, who joined the Regiment in 1927. He was again the CO in 1947-50, Hon Colonel 1964-67, BT Colonel 1950, and Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, 1963-1979 Sir John Thomson is also a Knight of St John

Fifty years ago. Meanwhile, the 63rd A/Tank Regiment (Oxf-Yeo) RA , continued it's defence role, leaving N Ireland in February 1943, moving first to the East Anglian coast, later to Hertfordshire, Folkestone, then back to the East Coast once more, where it assisted with the loading of stores and transport at Tilbury, required for the D-Day Landings, 6th June 1944 The Regiment, arriving in France some few months later, continued in Belgium, then Holland arriving eventually in Germany, having taken part in the Rhine crossing

Then came 13th April, 1945, when there happened one of the most extraordinary, and in the event, traumatic events that can ever have happened in the history of the Oxfordshire Yeomanry German officers approached our leading troops, under a flag of truce, and said there was a concentration camp a few miles in front of our lines of attack The camp was called 'BELSEN' and it contained lots of internees, many of whom had infectious diseases, some highly contagious, including especially Typhus, Typhoid, Gastroenteritis, T B and sundry other troubles There were reported to be 60,000 prisoners in this camp 249 Battery were selected to enter this camp on 15th April, to represent the Allied Army and take command of the German Guards, which included part of the Wehrmacht, the Hungarian troops guarding the outer perimeter, and the S S. controlling inside the camp a total of 800 Hungarians, 1,000 Germans plus the S S troops with Joseph von Kramer the Camp Commandant, who was known by the inmates as the 'Beast of Belsen' Subsequently he was tried at Nuremberg for War Crimes, found guilty and hanged 249 (Oxford) Battery was the first allied unit to enter Belsen (strength was less than 200), and as a result of its intervention at the camp, the Battery Commander, Major Ben Barnett, was made a member of the Order of the British Empire (O B E.)

When after the war, Banbury and Oxford men returned home, very few people believed their stories of the atrocities and experiences they had witnessed or had endured

Having served as a Regular Soldier in two regiments (both with written histories), I was somewhat saddened to discover on my arrival in the county from my home in Surrey, five years ago, that little had been recorded of the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, other than A Keith-Falconer's book, *The Oxfordshire Hussars in the Great War 1914-18*, which was privately produced in a very limited edition published about 1928. That is a most excellent book, so full of detail, and it is from this work that I have been able to reproduce the early years. This was followed by my own compilation, *Yeomanry Memories*, in 1992, covering the years since Keith-Falconer's book. Copies of this later book have been lodged in both the Banbury Reference Library and the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Oxford Central Library. The foregoing pages are a much condensed version of that book.

Note. For relevant earlier *Cake & Cockhorse* articles, see 'The Mutiny of the Oxfordshire Militia in 1795', by Pamela Horn (78, Spring 1979, pp. 232-41), and 'Banbury Rest Station and Canteen, 1914-1919', by Barbara Adkins (81, Autumn 1979, pp. 13-16)



UNDERGRADUATES, WARTIME VINTAGE

H. White

Clearing the loft recently I found a cardboard carton marked "Shippams Paste" It was stuffed with over a hundred air letters written home from abroad some fifty years ago Many were mud-stained, but all were dated and, although censored, cast more light on events recorded in my diary

Some readers of *Cake and Cockhorse* may have had similar experiences of wartime studying Others might care to compare conditions in 1939-45 with those of their own student days

Many of the Arts students who gained places at Universities in 1939 had entered service by mid-1940 Those who had chosen the Army found life drab, consisting of daily parades, squad drill, P T , route marches, kit inspections and numerous fatigues

In 1941 the programme became more varied. Members of a Field Ambulance unit, R A M.C., we were literally farmed out for potato-picking and "knocking and topping" sugar beet, for work on Britain's third line of defence in southern England, and for service in hospitals where we washed walls and polished floors, occasionally witnessing amputations in operating theatres The last provided experience for work to come

In the evening, when lorries brought us back to camp, the N A A F I pianist thumping out hit tunes would ensure that private study was impossible Some N C O's too took a healthy dislike to studious proteges One such vented his ire on "swotters" by relegating us in turns to the "ablutions", thereby unwittingly furthering our academic careers

We were then awaiting posting overseas Whoever became latrine wallah would repair to the back places, cleanse the Augean stables in about half the allotted time, then enter and bolt the tenth cubicle Private study, seat provided, was possible for about 45 minutes, until the stentorian cry "Orderly officer! Ready for inspection, sir!", was the signal to emerge and stand by one's lats

We gained some advance notice of service overseas and our kit bags bulged with books when we shuffled up the troopship's gangway and thence descended to the underworld of "E" deck, situated over the bilge water A torpedo struck The troopship sank and with it all our books.

Landed by destroyer at Algiers, we stocked up on second-hand copies of text books written in French and exercise books for diaries The texts did not last long Before embarking for Sicily, we were informed "You will take only emergency 24 hours rations Understood?" We kept our diaries, and buried the books under a pomegranate tree near Sousse

Fate intervened to make study possible again when we occupied a deserted shelled house near Etna. It had been ransacked, but not by academics. We found a few history books in Italian, and swapped them for ration cigarettes. At this time (July '43) thousands of Eighth Army men succumbed to malaria or infective hepatitis. Joining the yellow coolie brigade our small group lasted only four days in Italy before being flown back bookless to an army hospital in Catania, Sicily.

After recovering there some of us hitch-hiked to Syracuse and visited the stone quarries where thousands of Athenians had been imprisoned in 413 B.C., a genuine walk through history, even if the period did not satisfy modern historians.

Transit camps lack books. To reach our unit we had to pass through these purgatories. It was wonderful, upon eventually regaining the unit in Italy, to find that frantic appeals home for books had born fruit. *A Tutorial History of Greece* might not have the acclaim of J.B. Bury's standard work of those days, but was ideal as a light-weight bivouac companion.

These books were short-lived, nor did we witness their passing. We had debussed in light order, leaving our large packs in the lorry, and were marching up some hill attached to the infantry when the convoy in which we had been travelling was hit. Packs and books were burnt.

Booksellers in England were slow to respond to appeals for replacements. A month after we had applied to one firm came a tart reminder that we owed it 14s 6d.

Study was impossible at Casino. The compensation was that we were doing exactly the job for which we had been trained. One day the colonel assembled our small company for a pep talk. Ten of us were to march next morning up Highway 6 in single file at ten yard intervals under the protection of a large red cross. We would then set up an Advanced Dressing Station with stretcher relays linked to the Regimental Aid Post on a hill flanking the Monastery. We would be perfectly safe "if you do not make faces at them, (the Germans)." We neither appreciated his pleasantry nor believe a word, but he was right. The Germans respected our red cross to the letter.

From 1944-45 we lived much of the time in two-man bivouacs. We dug a trench as deep as conditions allowed and wide enough to accommodate two men. Above this we erected our bivouacs. Refinements for turning these quarters into study dens included scooping out ledges from the trench sides for bookshelves and converting the round fifty-cigarette ration tin into a paraffin lamp. This, fitted with a shirt-tail wick, made study possible after dark.

If only the campaign had been reasonably static, splendid academic results might have followed, but we were constantly on the move. During one frenetic day we dug five such bolt holes. At better times we took over slit trenches vacated by the Germans.

"Last night I found a Jerry (German) candle which we used in the bivvy, but it spluttered so that it was not much use."

In August 1944 our Division was pulled out of the line and given a break in Egypt. The sojourn there provided another welcome chance to broaden history studies, incorporating pyramids, sphinx and temples.

Back in Italy seas of mud impeded progress. Tanks churned it. Lorries became bogged in it. Tow-ropes broke. Dropped texts drowned in it.

Not only was rum issued on a generous scale, but trench-foot powder and anti-lice preparations, common enough in the First World War, came into their own again. By mistake the "cook'ouse" received sacks of trench-foot powder which would not bake into bread. We plastered our feet with dough.

"The cramped handwriting and muddy paper will tell you that I am penning this under a freshly pitched bivouac. Two 4.30 a.m. reveilles have made things rather tiring. I was glad to hear that the parcel of fruit from Algiers had reached you safely, if maggotty" (Sent over a year previously). We were fully occupied in the Gothic Line evacuating casualties by stretcher from hills inaccessible to transport.

The war in Italy finished in May '45. London University arranged for external examinations to be taken abroad that July. A few sat and fewer passed, understandably, considering that set books were not always available.

By 1947-48, after demobilisation, a few more had graduated.

That ancient Greek wiseacre Callimachus had once declared "Big book, big evil." He was right. We had managed on pocket size editions. Still, perhaps his proverb bears extension to " but no book at all, evil utterly diabolical."

EXPLORING THE INNS OF OXFORDSHIRE

Michael Hoadley

The advent of the railway and the growth of its system abandoned the road-side inn to desultory neglect. After the introduction of the automobile and the increase in the number of motorists, the old inns of England received a new lease of life. There are few relics of the past that inspire reminiscence quite like old coaching inns. Their signs of open welcome have hung through the centuries and within their walls persons of all classes have met to pass the time of day and to discuss the matters of immediate interest to them.

Inns, regardless of their size, along with the parish church, were centres of the town and village. Quite often the inn outranked the church as a nursery for the development of ideas and as a centre of community influence. Even today the populace of many small English villages is divided between those whose lives revolve around the church and those who prefer the less formal observance that the inn offers. As well as catering for the needs of the local inhabitants, the inn provided rest and refreshment to the road-weary traveller bone shaken by poorly sprung and seldom cushioned coaches.

The history of the inn is a long and complex one. It runs like a thread through the social history of eight centuries but has its origins even further back in time. The Roman *mansio* may be seen as the first appearance of the wayside inn in Britain. These were provided and maintained by the local communities at regular intervals along principal roads. The *mansio* was closely linked with the Imperial Postal System and supplied food, accommodation and bath house facilities.

The inn is inextricably bound up with the wayfaring life and the traffic of the country's roads. The inn is, in many respects, a peculiarly British phenomenon. Its foreign counterparts do not cast the same homely spell nor replicate the same ambience.

There are few forms of rambling more amusing and rewarding as a wander in search of England's old inns. But the inn ramble is vastly different from the pub crawl and it is not suggested here that inn wares should be sampled in a wholesale fashion. An inn ramble is a step back in time and an exploration of some five centuries of secular architecture. It is time for story telling and gathering up threads of local legend and custom and snatches of national history.

Inns come in all sizes and styles of architecture. Some are large, some are small. Some are hovels, some are hotels. Elizabethan times saw the rise of the alehouse. The alehouse played an important part in the lives of thieves and vagrants. By then, there was a clear distinction between the alehouse and the inn. The inn was an altogether more respectable establishment than the alehouse was. Alehouses were often part of a private dwelling such as a backroom or a kitchen.



In Elizabethan slang it was known as a 'boozing ken' An Elizabethan restaurant, an eating house, was called an 'ordinary'

Most of the old coaching inns in Oxfordshire lay on or near the main London to Gloucester and London to Manchester routes A number of them are situated near canals and river banks and served the water traffic as well Modern motorways have by-passed the old coaching inns

The *Rose Revived* at New Bridge was, for a long time, a private house, the 'little' Rose It overlooks the infant Thames In the 1930's, after a period in retirement, it was renamed The name honours its reopening rather than, as is traditionally the case, the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660

The *Lamb* at Ewelme is surrounded by history Henry VIII and Elizabeth I used the manor house as a country residence and Henry VIII spent his honeymoon with Catherine Howard there in 1540 Probably the oldest school in the country in its original building is situated there It was built by the Earl of Suffolk in the fifteenth Century Jerome K. Jerome, the author of *Three Men In A Boat*, lies buried in the quiet churchyard of St Mary

The architecture of old inns is rich and varied Externally, and often internally, old inns are a visual record of English vernacular architecture down through the ages

The *Remedeer Inn* in Banbury is Elizabethan In 1570, John Knight, a wealthy baker, bought a building adjoining his own timber-framed abode This he had demolished and built an extension to his house An inscription on the gate gives the above date which probably marks the completion of the building In 1637, the famous panelled Globe Room was added During the Civil War, when it was probably Banbury's leading tavern, with such a handsome 'function room', it must surely have been used by the Parliamentarians during the sieges of the castle, perhaps even Oliver Cromwell himself The painting 'When Did You Last See Your Father' was set in a panelled room similar to the Globe Room - but then many such panelled rooms were to be found in Cavalier homes, and the picture itself is a Victorian fantasy!

In A E Richardson's charming book *The Old Inns of England* (published in 1934) the author states that the Globe Room was dismantled and sent to America In 1964, the room was found by members of the Banbury Historical Society stored in a factory in Islington, London The Borough Council were persuaded to buy it (for £2,000) for eventual use in a projected Civic Centre, and temporary display on the top floor of the Library building in Marlborough Road, in conjunction with Banbury Museum When the Museum moved to its present site in Horsefair there was no suitable room for the panelling (and the Civic Centre project had disappeared with the Borough in the 1974 local government reorganisation) By agreement with the Hook Norton Brewery, owners of the *Remedeer*, the panelling was restored to its original home, and the Society held its A G M there earlier this year

The *King's Head and Bell* at Abingdon is an elegant example of the smaller inn of the early Georgian period. A fine Georgian front on the southern Oxford Road adorns the *Castle* at Benson.

The vaulted cellars beneath the *Mitre* in Oxford probably survive from the fourteenth century. The German pastor, C.P. Moritz, whose journey on foot is recorded in *Travels Through Several Parts Of England* (1782), has left us a charming recollection of the *Mitre*. As Moritz plodded wearily toward Oxford, he was overtaken by a don returning from his Dorchester curacy. They conversed in Latin. Near exhaustion, Moritz was ushered by the convivial curate into the *Mitre* and the company of a lively beer-drinking group of dons. Moritz spent most of the next day in bed with an appalling hangover from 'copious and numerous toasts of my jolly and reverend friends.'

In coaching days, the London to Oxford route was well-served. The *Oxford Arms* in London, which was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1666, was designed on a large scale to meet the needs of the traveller. An advertisement in the *London Gazette* for March 1672 read, 'These are to give notice that Edward Bartlett, Oxford carrier, hath removed his inn in London from *The Swan* at Holborn Bridge to *The Oxford* in Warwick Lane, where he did inn before the fire, his coaches and waggons going forth on their usual days, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. He hath also a hearse, and all convenient to carry a Corpse to any part of England.' The business of coaching to Oxford lasted until nearly the time the building was demolished in 1875. From Oxford, coaches spread out to other parts of Oxfordshire and to parts north.

A fascinating aspect of the study of old inns is the researching of the origins and meanings of the various inn signs. Some inn signs are indicative of the sort of clientele they used to cater for such as the *Trout* (for fishermen).

Other signs commemorate loyalty and affection for the monarchy such as the *Crown*, the *George*, and the *King's Head*. There are over a thousand inns with such royalist nomenclature.

The *Unicorn* was once popular with apothecaries as the horn of that fabled beast was believed to be antidote to poisons. The *White Hart* was the emblem of Richard II. According to legend, Alexander the Great caught a white hart and placed a golden collar on it. The white hart was seen to be a symbol of virtue.

Many inns named the *Bell* are situated close to the village church and honour the English love of bells and of bell ringing.

The *Red Lion*, another common name for inns and public houses, stems from the badge of the powerful John of Gaunt. The *Swan* commemorates an order of chivalry instituted by Frederick II of Brandenburg in 1440. It became the badge of Anne of Cleves and is an emblem of innocence.

The sign of the *Chequers* advertised that the inn-keeper acted as a money changer. Many of these so-named inns are found in seaports. The chequer board was used to assist the reckoning. The sign also suggested a place where draughts could be played over a drink.

The *Bull* and the *Bear* refer to those brutal and now outlawed sports. There is a *Bull* in nearly every market town and at Brading on the Isle of Wight the bull ring is still in place. Bulls were tethered to an iron ring set in the ground and specially trained dogs were set upon them. Bear-baiting was not quite as prevalent as bull-baiting. Some bear signs stem from crests and coats of arms.

While many old inns have been internally revamped, quite a number still retain much that is original. Many publicans have researched their own establishments and display photographs and drawings of the inn in a bygone age. The reign of Queen Victoria saw the eclipse of inn-keeping. Old houses in industrial areas were replaced by reeking gin-palaces. These too are a thing of the past.

Acknowledgments

The Banbury Museum and Ms. Christine Kelly

J.P. Bowes

Eric R. Delderfield, *Inns and their Signs*

A.E. Richardson, *The Old Inns of England*. Batsford, 1934.

B.S. Trinder, *The Story of the Globe Room*. Banbury Historical Society, 1984

In addition to the above, several articles on Banbury inns have appeared in *Cake & Cockhorse*. They include:

Vol. 2, No.10 (November 1984), pp.157-174 (six articles about the *Reindeer* and the recovery of the Globe Room).

Vol. 7, No. 4 (Autumn 1977), pp 103-115, 'A Century of Tavern-Keeping 1. The Stokes Family and the *Unicorn* and *Three Tuns*', Vol. 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1979), pp. 3-12, '2. The *Three Tuns* in the Eighteenth Century'. Vol. 10, No. 9 (Summer 1988), 'Living in Banbury 1660-1730. A Foretaste' (for a probate inventory of the *Three Tuns* in 1722) [the *Whately Hall Hotel* is on the site of and incorporates part of the building occupied by the *Three Tuns*].

Vol. 10, No. 1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 2-7, 'The *Wheatsheaf* and the *Adam and Eve* in Restoration Banbury'

Vol. 10, No. 6 (Summer 1987), pp. 147-150, 'An Historic Photograph Discovered' [the *Red Lion* in Banbury High Street in the nineteenth century]

For documentary research on inns and their landlords, see *Victuallers' Licences: Records for Family and Local Historians*, by Jeremy Gibson and Judith Hunter, Federation of Family History Societies, 1994



Copper medals struck to commemorate the 62-round fight at Banbury on October 22nd, 1789. left, Perrins, right Johnson

From collection of W H Chaloner

Photos W J Smith

MORE ON ISAAC PERRINS

Jeremy Gibson

It's known (politely) as 'Murphy's Law' Days after the last issue of *C&H* appeared, with my article on 'Prize Fighting at Banbury', inspired by the mug commemorating the match between Johnson and Perrins in 1789, Christine Kelly of Banbury Museum told me that an article on Perrins had appeared years before in *History Today* I have since acquired a copy of the issue (vol 23, no 10, October 1973, still in print)

The article in question was entitled 'Isaac Perrins, 1751-1801 Prize-fighter and Engineer', by W H Chaloner Perrins was son of another Isaac Perrins, who helped to erect a number of the new steam engines, mainly in the West Midlands, during the 1770s He himself was employed by Boulton and Watt from 1782, but had been a well-known figure in the prize-ring long before

The championship match at Banbury receives full coverage A report had appeared in the *Annual Register*, where the editor disclaimed any approval of the 'savage Practices' of the ring, but nevertheless devoted over three columns to an account of the 62-round contest (rounds averaged a minute during this match), because it was 'an Authentic Account of the Mode of Boxing at present practised by the most celebrated Professors of the Art'

The [turf] stage on which they fought was 24 by 24 feet, erected on a common spot of ground within the town and strongly railed in When the fight commenced, the mob broke through but afterwards were extremely orderly

The *Annual Register* thought that three thousand people witnessed the contest (as against *Jackson's Oxford Journal's* ten thousand), and nearly £800 was taken in gate money. The account of the fight differs quite considerably "Not a blow was struck for the first five minutes, after which Perrins attempted to hit Johnson, who avoided the blow by going down on his knees, much to the dissatisfaction of the crowd, which considered his action foul and unmanly. In spite of disparity in weight, Johnson frequently floored Perrins and almost closed up one of his eyes. Perrins became 'much out of wind, turning himself, whenever he fell, on his belly to recover it', but later passed over to the attack and closed one of Johnson's eyes. His final tactic, back-handed blows, failed against Johnson's caution and superior footwork, and, after an hour and a quarter, Perrins's friends conceded the victory."

Tom Johnson netted £533 out of the receipts and called on his defeated opponent after the fight to present him with a guinea in which to drink his health. Among the betting fraternity the odds had been on Perrins, and Johnson's backers did well.

It was reported among the sporting men, that MR BULLOCK made JOHNSON a present on *one thousand pounds*, and that he had gained, by the vast odds he had betted on TOM, twenty thousand pounds!

Two copper medals were struck to commemorate this fight, one showing Perrins and the other Johnson. The Latin quotation on the reverse of both 'Bella, Horrida bella', which may be freely translated as 'Hair-raising fight', comes from Horace and is an interesting example of the extent to which classical culture had permeated down to the level of the sporting fraternity. The medals may have come from Boulton's mint.

Perrins continued in Boulton and Watt's employ until 1794, having settled in Manchester, where he also kept a public house, the 'Fire Engine', and later started his own engine business. Egan stated:

Perrins was far from an illiterate character, and in his general conversation was intelligent, cheerful, and communicative. In company, PERRINS was facetious, full of anecdote, and never tardy in giving his song, and was a strong instance in his own person, among many others which might be cited, if necessary, that it does not follow as a matter of course, (as is too general opinion of the uninformed) that all PUGILISTS are *blackguards*!

His final employment was as 'the Turncock of the inspector of engines and conductor of firemen' for the Manchester Police Commissioners. On Tuesday 13th January 1801 the *Manchester Mercury* announced:

Died on Tuesday (January 6th), Mr Perrins, principal engineer and conductor of the engines of this town, and formerly celebrated as a pugilist.

Banbury Museum has both of the commemorative medals, and they are now displayed together with the mug to remind visitors of one of Banbury's outstanding sporting occasions.

Centre for Banburyshire Studies

Simon Townsend

The Centre for Banburyshire Studies opened last October in the refurbished Banbury Library. The new lift, which provides easy access to the upper floor, allowed a reallocation of space to take place, and consequently local history now has its own dedicated room on the first floor.

The Banbury Historical Society was very much involved at the planning stage, with our chairman Brian Little sitting on the project team. One of the first issues to be dealt with was, *what to call it?* Eventually we settled on the familiar (if unknown to cartographers) 'Banburyshire', defined by its ten-mile radius, as being the only name that describes this cross-county (and diocese) border region. (Interestingly, the approximate area did receive definition in the Banbury Poor Law Union formed in 1834, which was the basis for registration districts used in subsequent censuses and by the registrar of births, marriages and deaths.)

In creating this new facility our intention was to provide source material that formerly was only available in the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies in Oxford. This is in keeping with Oxfordshire County Council's policy of making its services local.

The room offers a very pleasant space in which to work. The new comfortable chairs and roomy tables integrate well with our glass-fronted bookcases and display case. However, it is of course the new records that offer the most significant development. Indexed transcripts of the registers of fifty parishes (mostly compiled by members of the Oxfordshire Family History Society), 25-inch Ordnance Survey maps from 1879 to 1930, census returns and a large collection of old photographs are just some of the new additions.

In detail the Centre holds

Parish Registers Photocopies of indexed typescripts for Banbury and the surrounding area (at present Oxfordshire only)

Census Returns Microfilm or fiche of 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 for Banbury Registration District, sub-districts of Banbury, Bloxham, Cropredy and Swalcliffe, and Brackley (N'hants) R.D. sub-district of Brackley. Note that the Oxon F.H.S. has published an index to surnames in the Oxfordshire 1851 census, of which Vol. 9 covers the whole of Banbury R.D. or Union, including those parts in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The *International Genealogical Index* for Great Britain. This is a computerised index prepared by the Genealogical Society of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons). Arranged (in England) by county, it lists births/baptisms and marriages, but not burials, in a great many parish registers from their earliest date (1538-on) to 1837 (when Civil Registration started). Note its coverage varies greatly both geographically and chronologically, and it is very far from complete.

Nevertheless for those researching pre-1837 it is an invaluable starting point - but absence of names sought does not mean they don't exist, merely that they aren't yet in the Index

Photographs from the 1880s to the present (copies can be ordered)

Newspapers Microfilm of *Banbury Guardian* (1838-on) and *Banbury Advertiser* (1855-on), other short-lived 19th century newspapers, *cuttings* etc.

Ordnance Survey maps

Local History publications.

Please come and use our new facility We are open Wednesday 9.30 a.m. - 12 noon, Thursday 2.00 p.m. - 5.00 p.m., Friday 2.00 p.m. - 7.00 p.m., and Saturday 9.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. As the Centre has only just opened the published opening times are subject to change, so it would be advisable to telephone Banbury Library on 01295 262282 if you are making a special journey We will be offering a special open evening to our members in January which will be publicised nearer to the event

Lecture Reports

Brian Little

Thursday 8th September 1994.

Chastleton House - Results of Research 1993-94.

A new season of meetings was given a lively start with an archaeologist's impression of the Oxfordshire property Chastleton House. Now owned by the National Trust, this was once in the hands of Gunpowder Plot Catesby who sold the place to Walter Jones, a wool merchant

John Steane's focus was on the servicing of the house and on the equipment and effects available to an unknown band of servants and maids. Through his slides he portrayed Chastleton in the form of a compact building with modest front door yet veritable forest of chimneys. Some stone was locally gathered but lack of Marlstone cleavage caused builders to turn to Westmorland slates

The main thrust of Steane's talk was an examination of the ways by which food and drink were brought in. Water supply depended on roof storage and wells but stronger beverages were never far away courtesy of the brew house and substantial wine cellar - hence blocked windows in place of extra servants

Chastleton appears to have maintained a good and varied table. Locally killed meat was bolstered with sausages from Oxford, tripe from Chipping Norton and marine fish from London. Oysters coming in were passed by pheasants going out

Equipment to cope with the demands of meals still exists but in varying degrees of survival. Especially attractive is a trundlewheel which was operated by a dog.

Amongst the servants were dairy maids who were presented with teapots, but was there a cook or did the ladies of the house prepare their own food?

John Steane's survey was an exciting exposure of life and practices in the country house of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Much remains to be researched but undoubtedly more of Chastleton's secrets will be revealed over the coming year

Thursday 13th October 1994.

Living History of Development of Arms and Armour in the Roman Period.

At 7.42 p.m. precisely the happy buzz of conversation was brought to a sudden halt by the spectacular clank of armour and the sight of your chairman acting as an impromptu standard bearer. The delayed start was not the outcome of roadworks and fog but rather the intricacies of kitting out for a talk which was every bit as fascinating as it was realistic.

Yes, there really is a society for those absorbed by the life of a Roman soldier. Three of its members, spearheaded by **Uri Trede**, gave our Society a living enactment of arms and armour in use throughout Roman times. The sharpness of a blade and the weight of a shield were experienced first hand as speakers plied their skills and the audience handled the astonishing variety of equipment.

It would appear that the Roman era, like later periods in history, was a developmental phase for the army. Chances of survival waxed and waned with the extent of protection.

As our Roman experts clanked away into the October night, our Society was left to ponder one of its most unusual meetings and one which rightly lent truth to the cry "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears!"

Thursday 10th November 1994.

"Ripples from the Local Pond."

Legendary tales from the land of the bear and ragged staff, not the black horse! Here were six profiles of South Warwickshire notables ranging from a Crimean hero to that most famous horsewoman, Caroline Bradley.

Paul Bolitho's menu was true historical *a la carte*. There was the gardening broadcaster, the fox hunting bishop, and the redoubtable 'Fruity' Metcalfe. Painting set up his tree garden at Stratford, Juxon achieved fame as Bishop of London and Metcalfe fashioned a royal connection with King Edward VIII.

The whole evening was no mere delving into a distant past. Fans of the Archers were rewarded with more than just an honourable mention of Norman Painting, who lived at Leamington and gained an O.B.E. in 1976. His energy and diversity it seems was exceeded only by Caroline Bradley who lived for horses and very nearly died in the saddle.

Paul finished on a musical note when he traced the career of Dr William Croft, composer and organist, and on a serious pitch when he recalled the beheading of Piers Gaveston at Warwick, after capture at Deddington, for his many supposed sins of support for an earlier and even more unfortunate King Edward.

Book Review

Souldern: Our Village in Oxfordshire, by Ann Prescott, 1994 120pp., copiously illustrated £7 00 (+ 50p p&p), available from the author, Crown Cottage, Souldern, Bicester, Oxon OX6 9JU

Souldern has been fortunate in its historians. Its modern academic history, fully referenced, appeared in the Oxfordshire *Victoria County History*, vol 6 (1959). Blomfield's *History of Souldern*, a full hundred pages, crammed with antiquarian detail, was published in 1893. Robert Hitchman (died April 1994) wrote three books of reminiscences of the village, and a local village appraisal committee published *Souldern - a Self Portrait of a Village* in 1989.

Nevertheless I am sure this book, *Souldern - Our Village in Oxfordshire*, will in future years prove quite as valuable if not more than any of these. It is written for those who live there, so what may seem pretty haphazard to the outsider will I'm sure be obvious to its intended readers. It moves from house to house, with old (and modern) photos, informative text, telling us as far as possible when each was built, who lived there when, with the occasional sale notice. Documents reproduced range from a tithe list of 1676 to a gazetteer entry of 1852, census statistics of 1881, a petition of 1911 and a water analysis of 1946. Quite apart from the expected photos of buildings, there are some wonderful ones of people: Mrs Eliza Reeve and Mrs Ellen Jarvis, both lacemaking outside their cottages, the choir (all named) in 1961, school photos (?early 20th century and 1939, alas unidentified), the darts team in 1950, the Souldern Feast in 1910. Don Kenchington ran the village garage (formerly the *Bull's Head*) from 1946 to 1987. The photo of his retirement party shows him being presented with a picture of the *Bull's Head* by another Souldern resident, artist Les Castle, nephew of no less than Flora Thompson of *Lark Rise to Candleford* fame. Haulage was always important, we have three generations of Bates 'Granny' Bates with her son, Joe, with horse drawn vehicle in 1911, and 'F F Bates & Son' with lorry in or before 1945 (his load appears to be young girls - his daughters?). There are football teams of 1924/5 and 1982, of cricketers and even the cricket ball won for bowling in 1935. The Souldern Club in 1909 (all men), the Women's Institute in 1933, sum up the change in social activity of the earlier twentieth century. Postcards from the front in the 1914-18 war, the Souldern War Book for 1939-45, together with the photo of the Home Guard (all named), straight out of 'Dad's Army', separately massed in full military might with the A R P and the Girl Guides, would surely have made Hitler realise the hopelessness of his cause.

Because I liked this book so much, and would in many ways show it as a model to other aspiring village historians, I must make some (I hope constructive) criticisms: no publisher's address (the printers' address is there, but they don't sell the book), no price (plus postage). Many of the photos would

have benefitted by being larger (for which, given a better layout of text, there would have been space) There is a very brief history of the village, quoting several sources: one can deduce these, but it would be helpful for their location to be properly referenced (whether publications or original archives); also to have a bibliography of other published sources for the parish's history. A contents page would have made it easier to find one's way about the book. Indexes, at least of names, but preferably of places and subjects too, would make the book far more useful. The author may think it's only written for villagers, but anything published has a much wider audience, and readers want to see at a glance what's in it for them.

I've already made it clear how much I approve of this book, but two more Brownie points: maps (Ordnance Survey in 1900 and one recently drawn, lettering a bit too small to be easily legible), and a clear identification in the title of the county in which the village lies (so many local historians assume everyone knows already, though Souldern, with a Northamptonshire border, may be more aware than most).

Souldern is fortunate in its historians.

Jeremy Gibson

Hook Norton Local History Group

This Group meets at 7.30pm on Tuesdays (dates below) at the Study Centre in the new Hook Norton Primary School in Sibford Road. The programme for the first half of 1995 is as follows:

- 10th January *Russell Cherry* on **North Oxfordshire Villages**
- 7th February. *Mrs Gracey-Cox* on **Costumes in History**
- 7th March **Annual General Meeting**
- 4th April *Caroline Gilmour*, **Angels and Serpents**, a talk on the Craft and Imagination of the Stonemason.
- 2nd May. *David Eddershaw* on a subject related to **Chipping Norton**

It is hoped that during summer months the Group can arrange outings for members and guests.

All meetings are advertised as open to all, though a charge is made of £1.00 for visitors.

From information kindly supplied by Christopher Barry, Chairman, HNLHG.

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Banbury Historical 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 and 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. Well over a hundred issues and some three hundred articles have been published. Most back issues are still available and out-of-print issues can if required be photocopied

Publications still in print include

Old Banbury - a short popular history, by E.R.C. Brinkworth
The Building and Furnishing of St Mary's Church, Banbury
The Globe Room at the Reindeer Inn, Banbury

Records series:

Wigginton Constables' Books 1691-1836 (vol 11, with Phillimore)
Banbury Wills and Inventories 1591-1650, 2 parts (vols 13, 14).
Banbury Corporation Records Tudor and Stuart (vol 15)
Victorian Banbury, by Barrie Trinder (vol 19, with Phillimore).
Aynho - A Northamptonshire Village, by Nicholas Cooper (vol. 20)
Banbury Gaol Records, ed Penelope Renold (vol 21)
Banbury Baptism and Burial Registers, 1813-1838 (vol 22)
Edgehill and Beyond: The People's War in the South Midlands 1642-1645,
by Philip Tennant (vol 23, with Alan Sutton)

Current prices, and availability of other back volumes, from the Hon Secretary, c/o Banbury Museum

In preparation:

Oxfordshire and North Berkshire Protestation Returns and Tax Assessment 1641-2, also including the May/June 1642 assessment for the Hundreds of Bampton, Banbury, Bloxham and Ploughley, in Oxfordshire, and Hormer in Berkshire, fully indexed. Revision and expansion of Oxfordshire Record Society vol 36 (1955) - to be published jointly with the Oxfordshire Record Society, 1994 (distribution early 1995).

A History of Adderbury, by Nick Allen

Selections from the *Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington 1836-1848*

The Society is always interested to receive suggestions of records suitable for publication, backed by offers of help with transcription, editing and indexing

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month, at the North Oxfordshire College, Broughton Road, Banbury. Talks are given by invited lecturers on general and local historical, archaeological and architectural subjects. Excursions are arranged in the spring and summer, and the A.G.M. is usually held at a local country house

Membership of the Society is open to all, no proposer being needed. The annual subscription is **£10.00** including any records volumes published, or **£7.50** if these are not required

