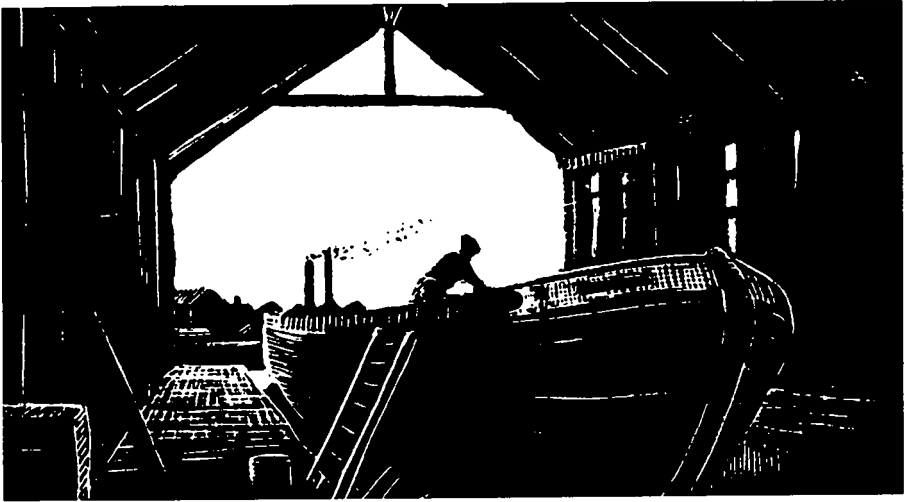


# CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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# *Cake and Cockhorse*

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

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In recent issues your editors have tried to provide some unifying theme, but it must be admitted that the three very different articles presented here initially seem to have little in common

However, two at least are illustrated by groups of *people* Associated with the two photographs of Tooleys' boatyard in operation, provided by the Oxfordshire Photographic Archive, is a wedding group, reproduced on page 74 The presumption is that it is a Tooley family wedding, but with no indication of date, location let alone people It is at present a mystery - can any reader tell us anything? John Dosssett-Davies' school group of 1932 poses less of a problem. He has identified several of the children They include the late Geoffrey Furnish of whom we wrote fondly in *C&CH* 12.4 page 106, whilst Ken Jakeman remains one of our most regular attenders at meetings for approaching forty years. Other identifications will be welcomed As for the little Northamptonshire lacemakers, how we wish we had photographs of them too

Yvonne Huntriss' review shows such photographs of identified people also dominate Nan Clifton's booklet on Shenington, and similar groups are to be found in the Hornton and Bodicote publications Photographs of people who lived in places always humanise local history, but wherever possible they should be identified, or they remain rows of meaningless faces.

J.S.W.G.

Cover. An illustration by Denys Watkins-Pitchford to Tom Rolt's book *Narrow Boat*.

# BANBURY AND THE OXFORD CANAL

*Brian Roberts*

Banbury is the large town at the mid-point of the Oxford Canal and Banbury citizens played a central role in its development, both as promoters and managers of the project

## **Concept and Act I**

On 13 April 1768, John Pain, Mayor of Banbury, received the M.P. for Oxford University, Sir Roger Newdigate in Banbury. Sir Roger had promoted a canal designed to run northwards from Coventry to the Trent and Mersey Canal (then known as the 'Grand Trunk' and under construction) and he now wished to seek support for a canal running south from Coventry to Oxford. They talked of the engineer James Brindley's vision of creating a 'Grand Cross' of canals linking the main navigable rivers of the realm - the Trent, Mersey, Severn and Thames.

A century earlier, reliable navigation up the Thames from London had been extended as far as Folly Bridge, Oxford through the construction of some of the first locks in the country, at Swift Ditch Abingdon, Sandford and Iffley, by the Oxford-Burcot Commissioners (1635), so the canal system needed only aim to join the Thames navigation at Oxford to provide a link with the great markets of London.

By the time of the meeting, the first two cross-country canals were progressing well. Both had been authorised by Parliament two years earlier on 14th May 1766. Firstly, the Grand Trunk Canal connecting the River Trent and River Mersey via the Potteries, and secondly, the Wolverhampton Canal linking the Grand Trunk from Great Heywood to the River Severn at Stourport, where a new town was springing up. The Oxford Canal would thus be the final arm of Brindley's visionary 'Grand Cross' and would link the birthplace of the industrial revolution (Birmingham and The Black Country) with London via the Thames downstream from Oxford.

Six months later Sir Roger returned and chaired a meeting in the Three Tuns, Banbury (now the Whately Hall Hotel) on 25th October at which he presented plans produced by James Brindley himself, designer of both the Bridgewater Canal (parallel to the Mersey), and the 'Grand Trunk' Canal (now known as the 'Trent and Mersey' Canal). At that one meeting local nobility and gentry subscribed the present day equivalent of three million pounds to the project.<sup>1</sup>

Because of the scandalous collapse of the South Sea Company in 1720, no joint-stock company could be created without the specific permission of Parliament. So four weeks later, on 29th November, Parliament was petitioned for a Bill which Sir Roger spent the ensuing months piloting through. By March

1769 the Bill was printed Viscount Saye and Sele of Broughton Castle (near Banbury) then reported on it to Parliament and Royal Assent was given on 21st April 1769, just one year after Sir Roger's first visit to the Mayor of Banbury.

The Act allowed for £150,000 to be raised, plus another £50,000 if needed. The company was not allowed to charge tolls on materials carried for road improvement nor to allow coal on to the Thames below Oxford. The meeting places of three management committees responsible for different lengths of the canal were specified:- one for the Coventry to Wormleighton length to meet in Coventry, a second for Oxford to Aynho to meet in Oxford, and the central committee to meet in Banbury.

One month later on 12th May, Banbury hosted the first meeting of the Company of Proprietors where the shares were issued in £100 units. Over half (sixty per cent) were taken up by people from Oxford. The engineer for the canal showed his confidence by signing up for twenty shares, as did Sir Roger. The Duke of Marlborough and the Marquis of Blandford bought fifty shares each, although most shares were bought in blocks of ten (the equivalent nowadays of bidding £60,000 at auction). The Vice Chancellor of Oxford University, Dr Nathan Wetherall (who had also subscribed for twenty shares) was elected Chairman of the Committee of the Company. Peter Bignall of Banbury was appointed solicitor to the Company as a whole, and the Treasurer for the Banbury sector was another Banbury solicitor, Benjamin Aplin, who resigned after six months because he wasn't being paid. The Banbury treasurer's post was eventually filled for his lifetime by Mr Calcot, a stationer, also of Banbury.<sup>2</sup>

## **Construction and Act II**

Final engineering designs were presented at the Three Tuns in Banbury that August, and the first mile south from Coventry was completed by the end of November. With 700 men employed, ten miles of navigation were open to traffic sixteen months later in March 1771. Only one set of locks, at Hillmorton, were necessary in the first forty miles until the hill at Napton, which was reached in 1774. Like many engineering works the Oxford Canal had cost more than initially forecast. As it paused, contemplating crossing the Northampton uplands into the headwaters of the Cherwell Valley, it had run out of money. This meant a second Act of Parliament was needed to allow the Company to issue further shares and thus raise more capital.

Lord North, M.P. for Banbury, a shareholder in the Oxford Canal (and Prime Minister at the time), ensured this second Act moved swiftly through Parliament, six years after the first. It received Royal Assent on 20th March 1775 and thus authorised a further £70,000 of shares, although it was thought that £30,000 would be enough to get to Banbury. It also stipulated that the venue for the General Assembly of the Company should be in the Three Tuns Banbury. Armed with this new money the canal proceeded to Fenny Compton by May 1776 and Cropredy by October 1777. On 30th March 1778 an inaugural load of two

hundred tons of coal was brought to Banbury Wharf amid much celebration. Sir Roger Newdigate was best pleased - his mines near Coventry began supplying coal to Banbury on a regular basis.

### **Co-operation and Act III**

The 64 miles from Coventry to Banbury had cost £205,000 (equivalent today to twelve million pounds) and again there was no money left. So the Oxford had parliamentary authority to construct - but someone would have to provide the where-with-all. As this was in a period when merchant banking was in its infancy and canal companies were stridently independent, only a third Act would allow more shares to be issued.

In 1780 tolls had raised almost £7,000, but over 40 per cent of this was needed to pay interest on loans, leaving little for shareholders. The shareholders would need convincing that by subscribing extra funds they would reap improved returns. They needed to know that there was a realistic prospect of increased trade on completion of the works, and that estimates of construction costs would be more accurate than before.

The same problems were facing the owners of other incomplete canals<sup>3</sup> and in an uncharacteristic act of co-operation representatives of four canal companies met at Coleshill in Warwickshire on 20th June 1782 and agreed target dates for three of them to complete connections to a place called Fazeley and the Oxford to join the resultant network to the Thames. Through traffic was expected to boost trade all round.

The Oxford Canal Company's commitment was to make the Banbury-Oxford link. Sixteen months later this aim was formally ratified (29th October 1783), but it took almost five years before a survey of the Cherwell valley was ordered (September 1788). The Cherwell had been navigable upstream from Oxford towards Banbury in the past, but by 1777 the limit of navigation was at Shipton-on-Cherwell, still fourteen miles short of Banbury.<sup>4</sup>

The Committee needed to convince shareholders of the probity of the construction project. They appointed a recognised engineer, Robert Whitworth of London, to prepare the drawings to accompany the bill through Parliament. His designs took the cheapest engineering options - in part dredging and realigning the River Cherwell, and designing 38 of the 79 bridges required across the canal as the cheapest construction possible - the characteristic lift bridges for which the South Oxford Canal is nowadays so famous.

This last Act, allowing a further £60,000 of shares, received Royal Assent on 11th April 1786. In May the company appointed Banbury man James Barnes, owner of Austin's Brewery in North Bar and £80 worth of canal loan stock since 1778, to be part-time supervisor of the work at a present-day salary equivalent of £12,000 per year. He was asked to follow Whitworth's designs exactly, given six surveyors under him, and the target of reaching Oxford by January 1791.<sup>5</sup>

Although construction under Barnes proceeded apace, the Duke of Marlborough was aware that the Thames and Severn Canal would soon offer a competitive route to the Thames (via Inglesham)<sup>6</sup> He was impatient for a connection to the Thames to be made, and built a private cut (Duke's Cut) across his land to link with the Thames backwater that fed his Wolvercote paper mill. This was the sole link with the Thames for six years, and allowed coal to be delivered to the upper reaches of the Thames.<sup>7</sup>

In mid 1789, the canal junction at Fazeley had been opened. The Birmingham and Fazeley came down through 38 locks from Farmers Bridge, the link to Fradley on the Trent and Mersey was open, and in 1790 the main line from Atherstone northwards from Coventry also reached Fazeley and thereby connected Fazeley Junction with the Oxford Canal

Finally the Worcester Street Canal Basin in Oxford (now the car park next to Hythe Bridge) was formally opened on 1st January 1790, one year ahead of schedule and almost twelve years after the canal had been forced to stop at Banbury

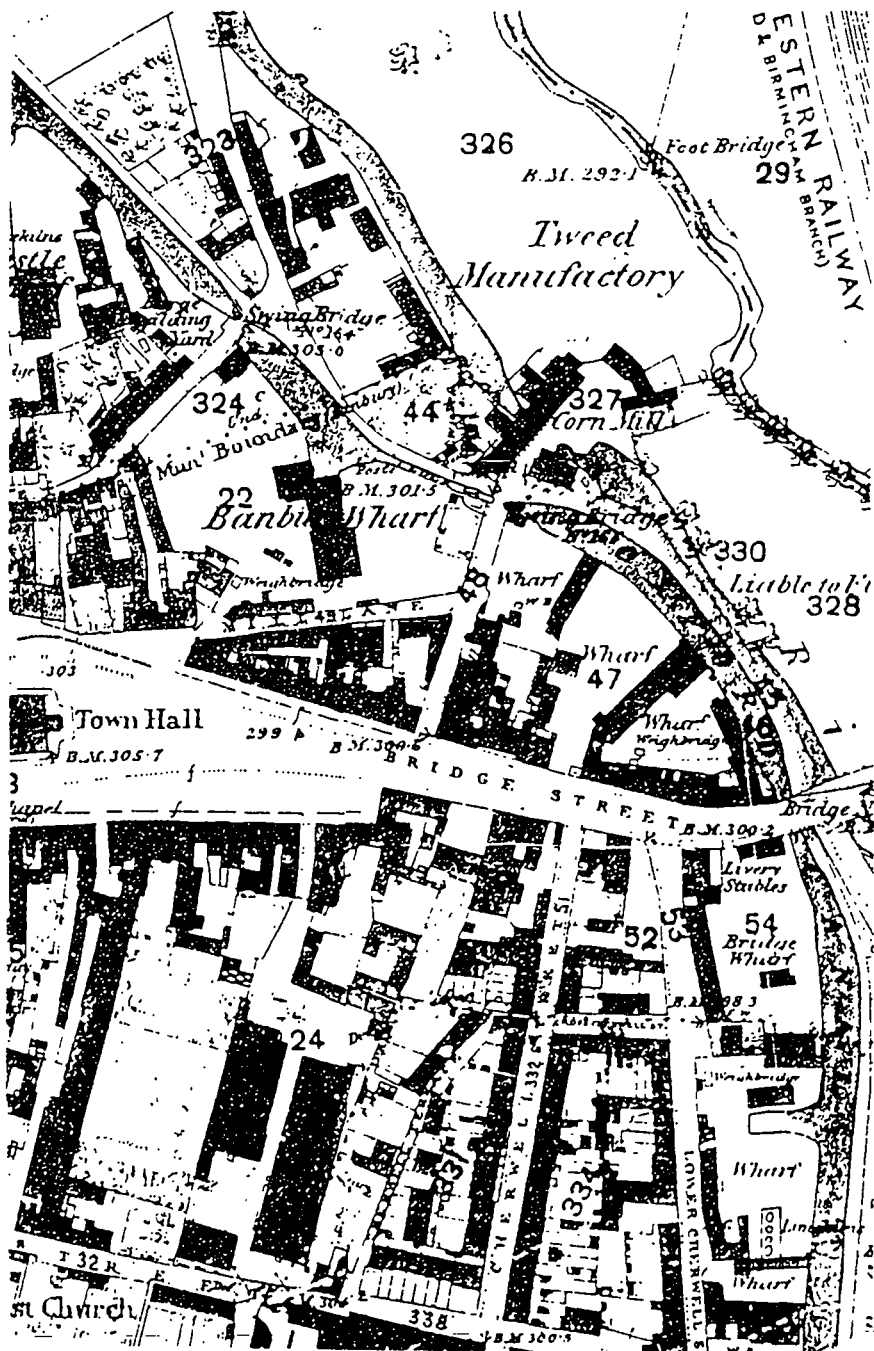
When the Oxford link to the Lower Thames through Isis lock opened in 1796, a genuine through route for heavy or delicate loads from Manchester, the Potteries, and Birmingham to London had been achieved. Traffic on the Oxford increased by a dramatic additional 50 per cent between 1801 and 1806. The Oxford Canal became a success story. High dividends became the norm. - 20 per cent in the years 1806, 1807 and 1808, up to 33 per cent in 1833, 26 per cent in 1846 and back down to a (nevertheless respectable) eight and quarter per cent in 1860.

Despite competition from the railways, the Oxford remained independent and continued to profit from the trade to London, even when the Grand Junction Canal made a wider, more direct and therefore faster, route to the Capital via Braunston, Daventry, and Tring but that is a different story

### **Banbury Terminal Basins**

Canal boats use a narrow ribbon of water to traverse the country. Canals are often only 14'-18' wide and so standard narrowboats, which are 72' long, cannot perform a U-turn. Every canal terminus has to include a short canal arm (or winding hole) to enable a traditional narrow boat to make a three-point turn ready for the back-trip. Financial troubles, as described above, meant that the Banbury basin was for twelve years the southern terminal of the evolving canal system. It included two winding holes.

After its opening in 1778, activity around the Banbury terminal basin no doubt grew rapidly, leading to the construction of many wharfs and warehouses to facilitate transfer between horse-drawn narrowboat and horse-drawn cart. As this was over 50 years before photography was invented, and 103 years before the first Ordnance Survey map of Banbury, precise details of how it looked during its twelve year monopoly of trade are not known





The first comprehensive surveyed map is dated 1881 (reproduced in part) and shows the two winding holes, over 1,500 feet of public and private wharfs, a one and half acre Canal Company coal yard, warehousing and stabling for horses Tooleys 'bargebuilding yard' is shown at the end of Back Lane on the West Bank of the canal above lift bridge 164. It is known to have been established in 1790 probably by a Mr Evans followed quickly by Thomas Cotton, and subsequently by Benjamin Roberts (1837-1864), the Neale family, and W.J.A Chard until 1900, but the longest tenancy by far, is certainly the two generations of the Tooley family, George and Bert, who ran the business for almost all of the twentieth century

Tooleys' boatyard is the only element of the 200 year old canal terminus that is still visible (1995) The two wharf arms, Castle Wharf along the former moat to the destroyed castle, and Banbury Wharf on the edge of the River Cherwell flood plain are both now filled in (although the wharf walls no doubt remain buried beneath the bus station tarmac) Tooleys' comfortable blacksmiths' forge and naturally-drained dry-dock have survived intact They are operational scheduled ancient monuments which not only have been in continuous use for almost all of their 200 year life but are still the basis for active work repairing and restoring traditional wooden craft.

The Tooley family were rare engineer/craftsmen, and were willing to turn their inventive hands to any new requests. They achieved literary fame when in 1938 they adapted a narrowboat for long-term cruising The story of 'Cressy' is recounted in L.T.C Rolt's influential book *Narrow Boat* first published in 1945 and reprinted in 1948, 1978, 1984, 1991 and 1994. Two chapters relate to Tooleys' and Banbury.<sup>8</sup>

Further literary celebration of the Oxford Canal, the boating families<sup>9</sup> that lived on the cut during the trading days, the part played by Banbury in their lives, and the practical support Tooleys' gave them, is given in a recently published book, *Ramlin Rose* by the well known local author Sheila Stewart Chapter 5 includes descriptions of courting at Banbury Fair and Chapter 7 includes descriptions of a birth and churning at Banbury.

Tooleys' Dock is about to undergo a significant change in its operation.<sup>10</sup> It is likely to be entirely surrounded by a development of shops, to be known appropriately enough, as the 'Wharf and Castle Centre'. British Waterways, Inland Waterways Association and, more recently, Cherwell District Council, are combining to point out to the developers the importance of their site to Banbury's history.<sup>11</sup>

Tooleys' was built at the same time as the industrial revolution came to Oxfordshire Banbury and the developer now have the opportunity to create a working museum of living industrial archaeology to complement the successful Cogges museum in Witney, which confines itself to Oxfordshire's rural traditions.



Tooleys' Boatyard in action. date unknown  
Photographs courtesy of D.L A , O.C.C., refs 1995/55/2 and 3



Let us hope the developer fully exploits this leisure opportunity within his shopping environment, attracts some extra tourists to Banbury and thus retains the sole surviving element of the 1778 canal terminus

## References

- 1 £50,400 subscribed A mathematical calculation of inflation 1790 - 1995 gives an 'exchange rate' of £1 = £59.98p.
- 2 The funds then passed to the care of the fledgling Banbury bank of Bignall, Heydon and Wyatt, set up by the same Mr. Bignall who was the Company's solicitor.
- 3 At that time the Coventry Canal Company had the rights, but not the money, to link Coventry to Fradley on the Trent and Mersey. A new canal, the Birmingham and Fazeley was being promoted, and promoters were keen to see the Coventry line operational. Under the Coleshill agreement, these promoters undertook to build five and a half miles of the Coventry's line north from Fazeley, the Trent and Mersey agreed to complete the link by building the other five and a half. The Coventry Company itself would complete the line to Fazeley from its then terminus at Atherstone The Oxford Canal Company would extend its canal from Banbury to the Thames at Oxford
- 4 For example, Sanderson Miller, Mayor of Banbury in 1707, brought his goods from Oxford to Banbury in specially designed flat bottomed boats.
- 5 He was at first, 'Surveyor of the Works' and then 'Engineer' to the Oxford Canal Company until 1794, although after 1791 he spent much of his energy on the design of the Grand Junction Canal on behalf of the Marquis of Buckingham He was also twice Mayor of Banbury (1801 and 1809).
- 6 Thames and Severn Canal was granted an Act in 1783, opened to Chalford in 1785 and joined the Upper Thames at Inglesham in Nov 1789 Trade was initially hindered by lack of a horsepath down to Oxford and the need for new locks on the Upper Thames - but this was rectified by 1791.
- 7 The Oxford Canal Company operated from wharfs on the Thames at Eynsham and Cassington, thus reducing the price of coal in all places within carting distance, e.g Burford, Wantage, Witney, Faringdon Prior to this connection, the source of fuel was the rapidly diminishing Oxfordshire woodlands or coal from Newcastle that had made the long journey down the east coast and up the Thames
- 8 *Narrow Boat* led to the formation of the Inland Waterways Association, which campaigned to stop the abandonment of Waterways after the war. The Oxford Canal was 'saved' in part by a rally of members boats in Banbury in 1956. This leading role ultimately led to the retention of canals during the period when they were losing viability for commercial carrying, and before



Tooleys' Boatyard, June 1995  
Photograph courtesy *Banbury Citizen*



Possibly a Tooley family wedding The photograph was with the two reproduced on page 72 Any information or suggestions welcome.  
Photograph courtesy of D L A., O C C , ref. 1995/55/1

they gained their present primary use for holiday boating (6,000-8,000 boats per year now pass through Banbury).

- 9 The Humphries family, the Littlemores and the Hones are quoted ,among others, in *Ramlin Rose*; Arthur Coles is quoted in *Cake and Cockhorse*, 6.2 (Spring 1975), Joe Skinner was the last 'Number One' on the Oxford Canal with a mule-drawn narrowboat, the Rogers are entrepreneurs who followed in their footsteps; and Ivor Batchelor (a Banbury man) of the Commercial Narrowboat Operators Association still trades on the canal today
10. Not for the first time. Over twenty years ago, the following appeared in *Cake & Cockhorse*, 6.1 (Autumn 1974):

#### **Tooleys Boatyard**

As reported in the Banbury Guardian of 11 July 1974, the Cherwell District Council's development Services Committee have applied to the Department of the Environment for a permanent preservation order to be placed on Tooleys' Boatyard (which the British Waterways Board want to replace by offices and a sales dock for the projected marina) as a building of historic value. This was the outcome of a massive rescue campaign mounted by canal users, among them the North Oxon Canal Users Association here in Banbury and the Trust for the Preservation of Oxford College Barges, whose technical adviser Mr. Maccoun went to considerable trouble to put together a brochure for the Council emphasising the crucial importance of the yard for the national canal network - it is one of the last three remaining in the country properly equipped to repair long boats - and also its considerable archaeological interest. It is a pleasure to report than an article on the boatyard in *Cake and Cockhorse* (Summer 1969) by our member Mr. G.C.J Hartland proved invaluable, and was reproduced in the brochure. The committee of the society also wrote to Cherwell District Council, emphasizing the enhancement of the purely historical interest of the boatyard by its present usefulness.

Although much progress has therefore been made, the yard - which canal users seem to regard with the affection that children feel for Ratty's home in *The Wind in the Willows* - is not yet secured: for although the Department of the Environment may well make it a listed building, the British Waterways Board (who have recently written unsympathetically to the Oxford Group) are apparently still contemplating a termination of Mr. Tooley's lease in order to make the area over to the marina developer.

The real battle is therefore perhaps still to be joined."

- 11 Policy C25 of the Cherwell District Local Plan (ratified in 1995) is to "to encourage and develop the educational, recreational and tourist potential of ... archaeological sites through . management and interpretation.'

## Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the original research undertaken by others. The following publications are the source of all the particulars included in this summary article

C Bloxham, 'Working the Cut - Reminiscences of a boatman', *C&CH*, 6 2 (Spring 1975).

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E Paget-Tomlinson, *The Illustrated History of Canal and River Navigations*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1993

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D Smith, *A Short History of the Oxford Canal Northern Section*, Banbury Historical Society, 1978

S. Stewart, *Ramlin Rose*, Oxford University Press, 1993

Members of the Oxfordshire Branch of the Inland Waterways Association are grateful to the following people for moral support and practical advice during this latest campaign to 'save' Tooleys'

442 signatories to our petition,

Simon Ainley, Juliet Nicholson, James Clifton, and Nigel Crowe of British Waterways;

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Tony Conder of National Waterways Museum, Gloucester,

Chris Home of Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Patrick Moss of W.S Atkins; and latterly

Councillor Jack Steer of Cherwell District Council

**Brian Roberts** is a member of the Railway and Canal Historical Society, and Vice Chairman of the Inland Waterways Association Oxfordshire Branch

**Inland Waterways Association** campaigns for the retention, restoration, conservation and development of the Inland Waterways for the fullest possible commercial and recreational use

## EARLY VICTORIAN SOUTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

*John Clarke*

G.M. Young's *Portrait of an Age: Victorian England* (1936) argues that the years between 1837 and 1901 possessed few common characteristics. Young believes that there was not one Victorian Age but three - Early, Middle and Late - each with its own unique 'time spirit'. According to Young, the Early Victorian Age - which he identifies as beginning in 1830 (though perhaps even in 1815) and ending in 1847 - had 'the unity and, at times, the intensity of a great drama about it'. Yet the keynotes of that drama were fear, crisis and tension. Above all, there was hostility and suspicion, even mutual incomprehension, between different sections of society. Perhaps Young's evocation of the mood of early Victorian England can be applied to South Northamptonshire. In large measure, it seems that it can - although there is one significant modification. Young's perspective is essentially metropolitan, when examining what was in some respects a rural backwater we might expect an element of 'time lag'. Thus it appears that aspects of early Victorian society persisted in South Northamptonshire until the 1860s. In other words, the early Victorian Age lasted rather longer than elsewhere.

Of course, much depends upon the sources consulted. One type may be described as 'official' and takes the form of the Evidence heard and the Reports produced by Royal Commissions and Select Committees. Although these documents often display considerable sympathy for the physical sufferings of the poor - especially children - their general tone tends to be critical of the lower classes, especially with regard to moral conduct. The other type of source may be described as 'informal' and comes in the shape of memoirs. One, Thomas Mozley's *Reminiscences, Chiefly of Towns, Villages and Schools*, is even more critical than the official reports, but another, Jack Linnell's *Old Oak*, is far more sympathetic. Remarkably, the patterns of behaviour described in all of the documents are very similar, although the interpretations placed upon them are it divergent in the extreme.

The main concern of the official reports is with the condition of child workers in two of the most important local industries - lace making and farming. Lace making, the chief occupation for girls, seems to have already been in decline by the start of Queen Victoria's reign. Reporting to the Royal Commission on Children's Employment in 1843, Major J.G. Burns describes the trade as 'very depressed'; already there are fewer 'Lace Schools' than in the past. The decline had gone further when Mr J.E. White reported to the Children's Employment

Commission in 1863. But Burns and White present essentially similar and rather gloomy pictures. Lace making required manual dexterity but little muscular strength. In order to develop their skills, the girls started young - at six or even earlier.

Lace Schools were usually kept by a woman in the living room of her cottage. According to White, the fireplace was normally stopped up to prevent draughts. There was no heating in Winter - 'the animal heat of the inhabitants being thought sufficient'. Ventilation was inadequate and conditions cramped, resulting in 'extreme foulness of air'. There were places where there was less than 25 cubic feet of air per child. The lace girls were also 'often exposed to the injurious effects of imperfect drains, sinks, smells &c. common at the outsides or narrow approaches of small cottages'. Wages were low and made lower by the prevalence of a truck system.

Many of the comments made in the official reports are echoed by Thomas Mozley. When Perpetual Curate of Moreton Pinkney in the 1830s, Mozley noted that in the typical Lace School, as many as thirty girls were packed into a small room. After dark, they gathered in groups of four or five round a candle 'about which water bottles were so fixed as to concentrate the light on the work of each child'.

Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that there is a consensus about the adverse effects on good health. Burns declares that lace making is 'very injurious to children and even adults from their assembling in number in small rooms'. One of Burns's witnesses, Dr John Collier of Towcester, insists that 'much injury ensues to young girls from a habit they have of wearing a strong wooden busk in their stays to support them when stooping over their lace pillows; this being worn when young and the bones soft, acts very injuriously to the sternum and ribs, causing narrow chests'. Dyspepsia and constipation are common complaints and consumption rife. White observes that the general appearance of all regularly engaged in lace work is unhealthy - and there seems to be a universal 'want of colour and also of animation', or as one local put it 'they look that white'. Most lace makers have 'worn and early aged faces and frequently failing sight'. This is the result of both long working hours and of the anxiety that comes from involvement in a trade which fluctuates between frantic activity and 'absolute want of work'. When demand is high even the youngest beg to work far into the night - knowing full well that this is the only way to get any money for themselves. White cites the example of a little girl of nine who 'works so hard as even to frighten her mistress for her health and till she has to stop to rest her little head'.

Burns examines several lace makers from Brackley. Ann Freeman, aged 52, says that she began work in her sixth year. She explains that children usually work a nine hour day and are very tired at the end of it. But she does not consider lace work to be particularly unhealthy - 'if they bean't set too hard a



task, it don't hurt 'em' Yet Ann agrees that lace making is harmful to children under eight - stunting their growth and weakening their backs, work is certainly harder than when she was young. Sarah Figg, aged 17, declares that, when a girl, she felt less tired than she does now. Caroline Chatwell, aged 13, works at Mrs Buffin's Lace School. Sometimes she feels faint for lack of food and has recently been treated for 'water on the brain', which the doctor attributed to her sitting so long over her pattern. In Winter, Caroline's hands and feet are very cold and she finds it difficult to work by candlelight. She declares 'We live very hard' and she has meat only once a week. Her wages are 2d or 1½d per week. Mrs Buffin occasionally gives her girls a slap with her hand or a knock with her stick. But Caroline does not blame Mrs Buffin who she regards as a good mistress and 'I like her very well', perhaps she does not wish to renew her acquaintance with Mrs Buffin's stick.

But concern about poor working conditions and low pay is far outweighed by alarm about the moral state of the lace girls. Here the attitude is one of condemnation, not sympathy. Dr Collier insists that the moral condition of the lace girls is as low as that of the (straw) plaiters of Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. Prostitution is rife among them for the same reasons - 'scanty earnings, love of finery and an almost total absence of early moral culture'. Collier describes most of the lace girls as undernourished, although they are generally well dressed - indeed 'their fondness for dress is proverbial'. Dr Dixon of Stony Stratford takes a more optimistic view, telling Burns that the health and morality of the lace girls is no worse than the average among the lower orders, at least it has to be acknowledged that 'syphilitic cases are of rare occurrence among them'.

Overall, there is a feeling that lace making is bad and there are even hints that involvement in a trade which panders to female vanity and is designed to increase sexual allure is inherently evil and destructive of morality. There is also the consideration that even the meagre earnings of the lace girls gives them too much independence from the authority of their fathers and husbands. Of course, girls who begin lace making at six or even earlier do not have the time to acquire the rudiments of normal domestic skills, hence they do not make good wives. There is a strong suggestion that, if girls are to be employed at all, it would be better if they become domestic servants. Such employment would prepare them to run a household of their own and bring them into contact with the higher moral standards of their betters. Significantly, there are many complaints in early Victorian Northamptonshire about the shortage of suitable servants. The great thing about servants is that they are under the supervision and discipline of respectable masters and mistresses and - above all else - it is supervision and discipline that the lower orders most need. Concern for the welfare of the lace girls may be entirely genuine, but it is hard not to suspect rather reactionary motives behind it.

Compared to the sufferings of the lace girls, the condition of children working in agriculture seems positively enviable. In 1868, Frederick Norman reported to the Royal Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture. Norman has several favourable comments to make. He notes that the system of working in private gangs, which causes serious social problems in the Eastern Counties, is rare in Northamptonshire as a whole and unknown south of Northampton. There are also few female farm workers in the southern areas. Many boys are employed and some have started as early as seven - although very young boys do not work throughout the year. Adult wages are 13 or 14 shillings a week in the north of the county and about 11 shillings around Towcester and Brackley. Women are paid 8d to 10d a day and boys under ten 3d or 4d. Accidents are comparatively rare and usually arise 'from children playing carelessly with machines'.

Mortality rates seem to bear out the belief that lace making is unhealthy whereas agricultural work is healthy. The lace making districts of Brackley, Daventry, Towcester and Potterspury exhibit some most unusual features. Elsewhere in the country the death rate among male teenagers between ten and fifteen tended to be higher than among females. Between 1833 and 1844, however, the female death rate for this age group in South Northamptonshire was no less than 85 per cent higher than for males. Even more remarkable, the teenage female death rate in the lace areas was twice the level found in the Peterborough region - where no lace was made.

Although agricultural work could be considered more healthy than lace making, Norman believes that it too has bad moral effects. A mother who works on the land 'must neglect her home duties and her husband's comforts cannot be attended to'. The effect on young women is particularly deplorable - 'they get into loose and disorderly habits and are rendered unfit for domestic service and are badly trained for labourers' wives'. One woman who works in the fields herself says that she will never allow her daughters to do the same - 'they learn what they ought not to learn and it is bad for their constitutions'. A clergyman declares 'We never like to take back to a mixed school a boy who has been out to work with men' and a labourer insists that his own son will not start farm work until he is fourteen - 'if he does, he is sure to have a depraved nature and catch up all that is bad'. There were three boys working on his farm and 'when they are together their language is very bad'. Women who work on farms are considered 'the lowest of the low', their cottages are invariably dirty, their children run half wild and the money they earn does no real good - 'in fact, they are generally the poorest families in the place'.

Many observers and witnesses believe that the availability of children's employment - and not any shortage of school places - is the real reason for the low levels of literacy. Some parents pay lip service to the need for education but, in practice, few are sufficiently unselfish to forego the extra income, however

modest, that their children can bring home Without education, again involving supervision by respectable teachers, moral education is likely to be absent. In short, the overall picture is one of children sadly lacking in innocence and - given half a chance - only too liable to indulge in early sexual relations

When dealing with the adult male workforce the main complaints are of violent - or at least threatening - behaviour, drunkenness and idleness A witness from Potterspurty is asked by the 1833 Select Committee on Agriculture whether he believes that farming has progressed or gone back in recent years He has no doubt that there has been a deterioration, caused by 'the incapacity of the farmers from want of capital to cultivate their lands, and to increase its produce by good cultivation and artificial means' The erosion of capital is rarely due to excessive rents or tithes, rather, it is caused by high wages and the burden of the Poor Rates The two are closely related Generous Poor Relief means that labourers have no incentive to work hard The 'superabundance' of the Poor has not brought lower wages - quite the contrary. Farmers are frightened by 'the almost general discontentment of the labouring population' and thus 'the men are paid more money for the same work performed in consequence of the intimidation arising out of the fear of fires'. This is a clear reference to the incendiarism associated with the Swing Riots of 1830 Northamptonshire as a whole was not seriously affected but North Oxfordshire was one of the major centres. There was serious trouble in Banbury, Tadmarton, Upper Boddington and Bodicote The Potterspurty witness blames much of the problem on the ill-considered Beer House Act of 1831 - 'Compared with five years ago, the demoralization of the people is increasing - due to Beerhouses, I consider them the principal cause of it, there is a facility and an increased inducement for the labourer to spend money, and they have no provident habits whatsoever'

Of course, a serious attempt was made to make the poor more provident by the abolition of 'out relief' and by the insistence that those seeking assistance must enter workhouses. These were the chief provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 - introduced into Parliament by a Northamptonshire man, Lord Althorp, son and heir of Earl Spencer Locally the measure was always known as 'Althorp's Act' The Act resulted in the appearance of large Union Workhouses at Brackley, Daventry and Banbury, with a number of Northamptonshire parishes included in the Banbury Union. Despite enthusiasm for the Act on the part of most of the clergy and gentry - exemplified by Colonel Cartwright, Chairman of the Brackley Board of Guardians - there was also considerable opposition, centred mainly in the villages of Moreton Pinkney, Helmdon, Culworth and Sulgrave. Up to a point, the Act seems to have achieved its objective of changing the outlook and standards of the lower orders - but only up to a point. It did not take much for the old propensity for violence to resurface. During the strike of agricultural workers at Evenley in 1867 there were several physical attacks on 'blacklegs' and heavy penalties were subsequently imposed upon the offenders by

the Brackley magistrates. Some of the Evenley strikers even had the impertinence to demand the vote and a Reform demonstration was held at Brackley in July 1867. But such demands were widely considered as absurd, almost comic. The *Bicester Herald* commented that the Brackley demonstration provided 'little instruction' but added 'that sad deficiency was, in the view of some, amply compensated by the great amusement it afforded'.

The various views contained in the official documents and in newspapers such as the *Northampton Herald* and the *Bicester Herald* may seem harsh to modern readers, but they are mild compared to those found in Thomas Mozley's *Reminiscences*. Mozley was a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford, a pupil and friend of John Henry Newman - he married Newman's sister Harriet in 1836 - and an important figure in the Tractarian Movement. Writing in the 1880s, he made no attempt to disguise the fact that he had been utterly miserable during his years at Moreton Pinkney - which he describes as 'a place of dirt, pigs and paupers'. Nothing about Moreton Pinkney appealed to Mozley, he even finds the landscape unattractive.

The valleys and villages of Northamptonshire are very like one another. There is nothing great or distinctive - no hills, no rivers, no plains of any size. The ash is the weed of the county. 'You've come to a very cold field' was one of my first greetings - field being the usual term for parish or like district.

But it is social conditions that most distress Mozley. He declares 'In no part of England have I seen so primitive society'. He would have been better received if he had 'been cast in an island in the Pacific among rude and generally inoffensive savages'. The people of Moreton Pinkney are certainly presented as rude and savage - but hardly as inoffensive. Mozley's typical parishioner is a lazy, drunken lout:

Here is a fellow, big, handsome, strong of limb, ready spoken and with brains that answer his purpose, who finds there are people who will care for his wife and children. He has married, very probably, the prettiest woman in the village and her children are like her. Whatever he may do, or fail to do, he knows that they will not want entirely for food and clothing. Night after night, day after day, early and late, earlier still and later still, he is sitting at the public house, neglecting his employment, disqualifying himself for it, and losing his employers or his customers.

The poor are presented as so disagreeable and unpleasant that, on occasion, the young clergyman has to remind himself that they are still human - whatever the appearances to the contrary. The conclusion is obvious. In one rather chilling sentence, Mozley insists that the only remedy is to tackle 'the worst plague of Christian civilization - the foul dragon to be crushed or chained, the scandal of charity'.

Mozley simply did not understand the poor. He did not understand their attitude to life, to work, to religion or to property. He certainly did not understand their sense of humour. Imbued with a strong sense of discipline and

hierarchy himself, he could not comprehend their rough and ready sense of equality or their desire to go anywhere they pleased, to do things on impulse. For Mozley, the Churchman, such behaviour is indictative of 'non-conformism' in the widest sense of the word - even though he actually seems rather puzzled by the fact that many Chapel-goers appear to lead decent and respectable lives. But the ultimate 'non-conformists' are the gypsies who wander the fields and green lanes. They have no respect for property or even boundaries - such concepts seem utterly alien to them. They cross fields everywhere, laying their hands on everything that comes their way. They are horribly impertinent - 'the mother of a tribe was warned out of a field by our neighbour at the old Manor House, when she replied "I walked this field before you were born and I shall walk across it when you are dead"'. The gypsies might represent an extreme case, but the rest of the poor were dangerously like them. It was almost too much for a delicately brought up young clergyman to bear.

But if Mozley does not understand the poor, the same cannot be said of another clergyman, the Reverend Jack Linnell. Many of the stories told in Linnell's *Old Oak* are not dissimilar to those found in Mozley's *Reminiscences*, but they are given entirely different interpretations. The gulf between the two can be illustrated by their attempts to reproduce the South Northamptonshire dialect. In old age, Mozley wonders if the children at Moreton Pinkey still sing 'the foxes have holes and the birds have nestis' but this is poor stuff compared to Linnell's account of a sermon delivered by a Methodist local preacher at Silverstone.

Well, here I be, but I never thought o'one time as us'd get here. Afore us set out, the missus wur as akhud as could be, an' comin' down Gulliver's Hill, the brutchin bruk, an' us settled down as nice as could be on the grass by the side of the rooad 'Bwoy', says I, 'Ole Scraaper (the Devil) doon't mean as us shall goo to Silson (Silverstone) to-day, but us'll see if us kecut dish th'ole chap!' an' so here us be, but for the good I'm a-gooin' to do you, I might just as well a' stopped up in Buckness's 'ood an' hollered 'Cuckoo', for you Silson folk never did know nuthin', an' never 'ull, and I reckon nuthen'll ever be required an' ye.

But there is no condescension in Linnell's pages. Readers of *Old Oak* are introduced to the fierce but still delightful world of the forest villages between Brackley and Towcester and Linnell identifies himself heart and soul with the freedom loving inhabitants of his native Silverstone. Silverstone emerges as the centre of a positive campaign to resist the encroachments of discipline and authority - the kind of values that Thomas Mozley supported so enthusiastically. There was no 'big house' in the village - the usual source of the enforcement of deference. Everyone was more or less independent and 'Jack was as good as his master the whole parish through'. A man who lost his job with one master would easily find another or perhaps start in business on his own. No deference was given to any of the local nobility or squirearchy. The people of the Forest are presented as a fierce and upstanding race - with their physique and muscles

developed by constant axe and saw work in the open air. Only a fool would antagonise such men, the sort who made Silverstone a by-word for fighters; Linnell himself had been a prize-fighter before entering the Church. Above all, everyone, even the women, possessed a knowledge of woodcraft and shared 'a common love of venison as strong as that which ruled the lives of Robin Hood and his merry forest men down Nottingham way hundreds of years before'

Linnell delights in telling the stories of how 'Silson' got the better of a 'Squarson' from a neighbouring village, a magistrate celebrated for his ceaseless endeavours to suppress lawlessness by the savagest of sentences' One moon-lit night, the people of Silverstone went 'nutting' in his woods and a fight ensued with his keepers. The 'Squarson' recruited as many strong men as he could and, next morning appeared in Silverstone with his little company, an appropriate supply of handcuffs and a cart to take away those he intended to arrest. All seemed quiet, although there was a cart loaded with staves near to the Church. Suddenly the Church bell rang out, villagers emerged from their houses, seized a staff each and fell upon the invaders. To the astonishment of the 'Squarson' they proceeded to drive his men out of the village. Of course he was not content to leave matters there and called in the famous Bow Street Runners to take the necessary action. The Runners' first instruction was to arrest a butcher named Farmer. But Farmer had been forewarned and positioned himself on his roof brandishing a scythe - 'they commanded him to come down, he invited them to come up'. A crowd gathered and plied the Runners with drink. As they drank their enthusiasm for arresting Farmer diminished by the minute. Eventually they decided that discretion was the better part of valour and they left the village without their prisoner and on the best of terms with the 'nutters' - 'They were wise men, those nutters'

It seemed that this was the end of the matter but 'Silson' had not finished with the interfering 'Squarson'. He was a great lover of horses - and treated them better than his servants. One morning, when riding to Buckingham, he came across a wagon, laden with wood, going up a hill, with a heavily built young man lolling on the shaft. He dismounted and delivered a firm rebuke in his best magisterial manner. Satisfied with the effect that he had produced, he resumed his journey, only to hear behind him 'a torrent of blasphemy reflecting on parsons in general and as such as were squires and magistrates in particular'. Scarcely able to believe his ears, he swung round - but there was not a soul in sight other than the subdued boy trudging slowly by the side of his load. For the moment he thought he must have imagined it; it seemed impossible and so he turned towards Buckingham once more. A fresh torrent of blasphemy followed. This time there could be no mistake. He galloped back to the wagon. Despite every effort he could get no sense out of the boy, in the end he had no option but to give up. Of course the boy was sought out and brought to court. There the 'Squarson' gave full vent to his indignation as he described the insults that he, a magistrate, had

had to endure. But then the blow fell. It was proved beyond all possible doubt that the boy had been deaf and dumb from birth. The case collapsed and the 'Squarson' was left looking totally ridiculous. What had happened was really quite simple. Another boy had been hidden in the load of wood and it had been he who had made such unfortunate reflections on parsons and magistrates. The deaf and dumb boy had been the bait and the Squarson had fallen neatly into a carefully contrived trap. By Mozley's standards this was impertinence beyond endurance but 'how Silson grinned' and one feels that Linnell was grinning too.

Since time immemorial, the great forest of Whittlewood had belonged to the Crown. In theory, the Forest Law had been ferocious, but at least since the eighteenth century, its enforcement had been lax. Linnell knew of a cottage over whose threshold more deer had passed in a year than ever reached the royal larders. For many, poaching had been a way of life and Linnell's father, for one, could never bring himself to 'shop' a poacher. In 1853, however, the forest was sold to private landlords; fences were erected, the deer rounded up to stock ornamental parks and thousands of oaks were felled. Forest villagers, who had once wandered at will, were now treated as trespassers. They found it hard to adjust to the new ways. Their ancestors had wandered in the forest for so long that they honestly believed that what they called their 'privileges' were immutable rights. They fought a rear-guard action with astonishing tenacity and ingenuity.

Linnell's father owned a cottage which had a hole in the bedroom floor, but the tenant, 'old Ben' seemed strangely reluctant to accept his landlord's offer to have it repaired. He placed a piece of wood over the hole and insisted that 'it wouldn't hurt'. One day one of the new county policemen came with the parish constable to arrest old Ben for poaching. They found him in bed and thought they had him cornered.

'You'll let me dress an' put me boots on, master?' he asked meekly. The request seemed reasonable enough and the cornered man, having got into his clothes, sat down on the board that covered the hole in the ceiling to lace up his boots. Then a miracle happened! There was a slight movement of the foot, a displacement of the board, a disappearing poacher and a county and parish constable telling each other excitedly that they had never known anything like it in all their lives. Meanwhile Ben was well on his way to the woods again.

Of course, not all were as fortunate as old Ben. Another poacher, poor Bob, was caught and taken to Northampton Assizes. Unable to appreciate the enormity of his offence, he thought that, at worst, he might get three months, they gave him seven years.

One of the points made by Linnell - which would have been totally lost on Mozley - was that the poor were not just a rabble. They had a code of conduct of their own, perhaps not the same as their betters', but still a code in its own right. When Linnell was a boy, flagrant breaches of the moral law were punished by three nights of 'rough music'. This practice, known as 'lowbelling' involved men

and boys banging metal trays and blowing horns, marching through the village and carrying straw effigies of the offenders. They proceeded to the houses of the guilty parties, made a tremendous noise and burned the effigies. For some, this treatment represented a deterrent as effective as anything a magistrate might do. But the demonstrations were usually peaceful and, having made their point, the villagers returned quietly to their own homes. Trouble was only likely if the offenders were foolish enough to seek the protection of the law - and then there would probably be a first class riot.

Even within the fairly small area of South Northamptonshire, there were significant differences in patterns of behaviour. 'Closed' parishes, like Aynho, were models of deference, supervised by strict, though generally benevolent squires. 'Open' parishes, especially in the forest, still saw themselves as essentially self governing communities and regarded outside authority as irritating and something to be fiercely resisted. But we must ask what it all means. Perhaps, once upon a time, in the far distant past, everyone had been like Mozley's gypsies and Linnell's foresters. They had resembled children - quick to anger and violence, but also capable of impulsive kindness. They had been remarkably unselfconscious - about sex and about their bodily functions - and were ready to indulge in all sorts of rough games and horseplay. There may have been 'ranks' and 'orders', but there were no 'classes' in the modern sense of the word. Together they formed a community or *Gemeinschaft*.

The concept of class is usually associated with a Marxist interpretation of history. Classes such as the 'bourgeoisie' or the 'proletariat' are defined as groups with specific and competing economic interests. It is true that there is often an economic dimension to class, but there are other angles as well. Perhaps the best way to define a class is as a group with a distinctive value system and life style. On this basis, we may interpret the history of England over the past five hundred years in terms of the gradual transformation of the traditional community into a class based society, or *Gessellschaft*.

It is vital to appreciate, however, that all of the classes of modern England did not appear at the same time. The first definite class to emerge, as it were to leave the *Gemeinschaft*, was the gentry. From the sixteenth century onwards, the gentry began to develop its own fashions, its own code of conduct. In many instances it withdrew physically from the traditional community, leaving its old manor houses in the middle of the village to move to new 'big' houses surrounded by park land and high walls. There are many such houses in Northamptonshire. The gentry saw itself as more disciplined, more calculating, less violent, more civilized and altogether more 'grown up' than those who remained in the traditional community. The members of the new class became more self conscious about everything, perhaps more affectionate to their immediate family but less tolerant of those elsewhere in society who had yet to subscribe to their values. It is easy to see why the moral imperatives of



Puritanism - so strong in Tudor and Stuart Northamptonshire - should have suited them so well.

The next step came in the eighteenth century, with the emergence of a distinct class of tenant farmers. Many of their values were similar to those of the gentry - though not quite the same. If anything they were more disciplined and more hard-headed in their dealings with their social inferiors. The crucial difference was that their value system included something of a 'work ethic'; by definition, gentlemen do not work while tenant farmers must. Again the change was accompanied by a physical move; the process of Enclosure allowed them to move from their old farm houses - usually in the village street - to new isolated farm houses in the middle of the enclosed fields, thus making for more efficient use of labour and resources.

The crucial question now was whether the process could be taken further? Could what was left of the traditional community, still clinging to the old ways, be transformed into some kind of new class? As things stood, the process was incomplete. There was indeed mutual incomprehension between those who subscribed to 'class' values and those who as yet had no class of their own. It is not surprising that Mozley and those who reported to the various Commissions found the lower orders alien - in Mozley's case, as alien as Pacific Islanders. Those who were so critical of the values of the old community really wanted the poor to 'grow up', to be responsible and sensible, perhaps even a little dull. Their objective was a class of sober and hardworking labourers. Of course the values of such a class would not be entirely the same as those of the gentry or the tenant farmers. There might even be tension and conflict. There are hints of such conflict in the Evenley strike of 1867. But although there might be problems one still feels that the Evenley strikers with their demand for the vote were really closer in outlook to their betters than the rick burners of 1830. In other words, perhaps the tension between classes is never so acute as that between those of class and those of no class.

The crucial question was how the transformation was to be effected, what pressures should be employed to create a class out of the mass, and especially on those who seemed most likely to cling to the 'wrong' and 'alien' values? The slaying of 'the foul dragon of charity' might help but would not solve everything. There was another, more drastic solution; it was quite simply, to lock up the actual or potential misfits. In 1961, a French writer, Michel Foucault, published a book entitled *Folie et Deraison: Histoire de la Folie a l'Age Classique*. Foucault postulated that the best label to attach to the history of France in the century after 1650 was not 'The Age of Reason', but 'The Age of Confinement'. The book attracted the attention of British critics who argued that, whatever the case in France, it would be absurd to apply any such label to England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The critics were probably right, yet there is a case for saying that Foucault's label does fit early Victorian Northamptonshire rather

well As the various reports demonstrated, it was not desirable that women should be allowed to work in the fields or in lace schools - therefore they should be confined to the home, as dutiful wives, obedient daughters or grateful servants It was also undesirable that children should be allowed to work - therefore they they should be confined to schools. It was undesirable that the sick, lunatics or criminals should mingle with the rest of society - therefore they should be confined to hospitals, asylums and prisons Above all it was intolerable that those who could not or would not support themselves should be allowed to demand charity, wander freely and generally annoy their betters - therefore they should be confined to workhouses.

Those who wanted to change the habits and values of the poor were generally actuated by the best of motives They genuinely believed that the old ways were valueless Of course, Jack Linnell did not He thought that the programme of discipline would destroy local variety, freedom and independence; it would put an end the old child-like joy of life He had a point although it is dangerous to be too romantic about the 'good old days' he so lovingly describes. Perhaps the crucial thing is that Linnell was considerably younger than the other commentators By the time he was writing at the turn of the century one could enthuse about a lost world - precisely because it was lost He could indulge in a pleasurable nostalgia because the programme of the earlier commentators and critics had achieved most of its objectives.

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## **FROM A NORTH BAR WINDOW: A Child's View of Banbury in the 1930s**

*John W. Dossett-Davies*

In 1929 at the age of 2, my parents' marriage having broken down, I went to live with my grandfather, William George Dossett, in his apartment over his grocer's and wine merchant's business at the corner of North Bar and Parsons Street (53 North Bar and 33-34 Parsons Street) Banbury I lived there until I was 10 in 1937 and he retired to Witney having been in business in Banbury for fifty years.

Growing up in pre-war Banbury for those eight years gives that period a containment which is unusual and makes the memories especially vivid That part of childhood for me is sealed off like a ship in a bottle. To start life and to have lived one's early years over a high-class grocers and wine merchants is an unusual, but useful, start in life A sentiment which our former Prime Minister might well agree with! Retail trading, like being a policeman, a doctor or a vicar, gives a far deeper insight into other people's lives than most other callings



**Miss Dolly Bromley's School, 1932.**

Back row, left to right, fifteen standing 1 Dick Fowler, 3. John or Michael Bennett, 4. Geoffrey Wrigley; 6. Mignon Pollack,  
9 Dick Paxman, 11 Geoffrey Furnish; 13 Richard Waldoock; 14 Kenneth or Edmund Kingerlec

Second row, twelve sitting, one standing 2 Edmund or Kenneth Kingerlec, 4 Miss Robins; 6. Miss Bromley, 7. Miss Stevens;  
9. Kenneth Jakeman, 11 Margaret Paxman; 13 Joan Field (standing)

Front row, sixteen sitting: 3. John Dossett-Davies; 7 Enid Clark; 14 Evelyn Kingerlec, 15. Jackie Wrigley; 16. Bobbic Turner

It was the Banbury of frequent sporting events on the Harriers Field; of Johnnie Byles, Banbury's very own boxer, Mr Tuzzio, the ice-cream and barrel organ man; of the Banbury Sound; of the first Belisha beacons, of E W. Brown's Original Cake Shop and Wincott's restaurant with its silver-plated tea-pots and cakes and buttered bread; of a reasonably-sized market town starting to expand with a newly-arrived Northern Aluminium Company and the new estates of Easington and Ruscote going up. There was still some horse-drawn traffic about and cattle and sheep still stood in the streets on Thursday market days, their owners with sticks, clean shirts and stiff woollen suits, stood near them while the farmers' wives trawled the shops, including our own, for a chat and to put an order in, parts of Banbury were still like a German gingerbread town. It was a time when the Neithrop workhouse inmates could be picked out by their distinctive clothing; when cars were known as motors and some streets were still lit by gas and the gasman came round on his bicycle with his long pole each evening to light the lamps.

The history of my grandfather's business has been previously described in an article published in 1989<sup>1</sup>. This now is a personal account of gradually widening horizons, both physically and mentally, of starting to grow up in Banbury. In short it is a description of a pre Second World War Banbury childhood.

I was an only child and the family unit consisted of my grandfather, William George Dossett, a widower, aged 71 in 1929 and starting to think of retirement from his business, and his two daughters - my mother and her slightly younger unmarried sister, Aunt Mabel. To assist them in running the large apartment over the shop were two daily maids and a younger nursery maid called Madelaine, about 17, whose main responsibility was to look after me (this was before I started school), help dress me, take me out, read to me, bath me and put me to bed. She also made superlative cocoa.

### **Going to school**

My first school which I started at four years of age was located opposite my grandfather's shop at 9 North Bar and was known as Miss Dolly Bromley's Infant School. It was a gentle, fey sort of institution presided over by a gentle, fey lady. Most of the children of the leading families of Banbury started their education there including the Kingerlees, the Waldocks, the Bennetts, etc. One of the shop assistants used to see me through the traffic on North Bar, which even in those days was quite plentiful, and fetch me after lessons. It was a sort of old-fashioned Dame School and a very pleasant introduction to the world of learning, although I'm not sure exactly how much we really learned.

My second school, which I started when I was seven, was Miss Mellers' Private School in Marlborough Road, a very different establishment from Miss Bromley's. Miss Meller took pupils up to 16 or 17. To me there seemed to be hundreds of children and I recall the regime was somewhat chaotic to say the

least. It was at this school that I first learnt that the world is not always an easy-going place! I recall two teachers quite vividly - Miss Stephens, an older lady, and Miss Butler, a younger more glamorous one. Miss Mellers herself was a tiny crippled lady who had calipers on her legs and used two sticks and walked with great difficulty. She had jet black, shiny hair which was parted severely in the middle of her head. She could be charming in the extreme, but she could use the cane with a frequency and ferocity which made large boys weep. I recall a pitiless attack on a boy called Jack Amos, a few years older than myself, who cried out in pain and terror. He later became Mayor of Banbury.

After a few weeks of being taken to school I used to walk the half mile there and back on my own twice a day, complete with an apple from Mr Barlett's greengrocer's shop in Parsons Street for my elevenses. The highlight of the year was the school sports day which was held on the old Harriers Field. On one occasion I was taken to London by my grandfather who went there on business. He showed me the statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus. He went on to tell me that it was the centre of the Empire and if one stayed long enough one would see everyone of importance pass by - I did not really believe him as I was unable to see Miss Butler, my teacher!

### **National events**

In an age before television, national events did not have the immediate impact on a small boy that they would today, but events like the death of Queen Astrid of Belgium in 1935, which I read about in the newspaper, the marriage of the Duke of Kent to Princess Marina of Greece, when we went to the local railway station to see them come through on their way to Staffordshire to spend their honeymoon (we waited in vain), and the death of King George V when all the shops closed, were the events which did impinge on us. His Silver Jubilee in 1935 with its free cinema show and children's party, and the gift of a unique aluminium Silver Jubilee mug, also made quite a memorable impact. As did Armistice Day each year. The celebrations were held in the park at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month - everything, literally everything, in Banbury came to a complete standstill for two minutes. I do not recall much about the Spanish Civil War, but quite a lot about the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and the Abdication of King Edward VIII was notable because of its effect on adults. A major local event was seeing the military funeral of Lord North of Wroxton Abbey who died at the age of 96 on 14th April 1932. I was taken by Madelaine to stand outside St John's Catholic Church. As a military funeral with bands and the heavy beat of drums, flags and a host of slow marching soldiers, and shouted commands, it made a vivid impression upon me. It was the first funeral I had seen and it remained my most impressive until I saw Sir Winston Churchill's thirty years later.

Boxing was very popular in Banbury in the 1930s. The town had its very own heavyweight, Johnnie Byles. My grandfather was a keen boxing fan, and always listened to fights on the radio. I collected a whole set of Churchman's cigarette cards called Boxing Personalities, and there was much talk at North Newington about the merits of Tommy Farr, Ben Foord and Jack Petersen.

### **The Life of North Bar**

Looking out on to the broad busy thoroughfare of North Bar one saw all human life pass by. Having no garden my family, on summer evenings, would sit and watch the passing scene from the window of the drawing room, with window boxes of scarlet geraniums, rather like Spanish and Italian families still sit on their balconies on summer evenings. My family appeared to know virtually everyone who walked by and could give a pocket history of most people who came in sight. Even in those pre-war days there was plenty of traffic passing by including the bodies of cars for the motor factories, Model T Fords, cycle clubs from Coventry and other Midland towns and charabancs coming from Birmingham on hot summer Sunday afternoons to take tea at Mrs Sansbury's Cafe or the Regal Hotel in North Bar. One of the strangest events I witnessed was the mass visit of the unemployed hunger marchers from the North of England with their banners, on their way to London in 1936. My grandfather closed his shop and put up the shutters, but in the event the huge mass of men were perfectly orderly and collected money by pushing their cans on sticks up to the first floor windows when we gave generously to them.

I can vividly recall all the people who inhabited North Bar during the 1930s. Miss Wheeler, a tall, angular Victorian lady who ran the Corn Chandlers, T R Wheeler & Company, next to our shop, at 52 North Bar, with her crowd of rats which sometimes ran into our shop causing a rat chase to take place. Her stores were pulled down and the site incorporated into the Buck and Bell pub before we left Banbury, old red-faced Mr William Jelfs, every inch the family butcher with his gold Albert watch chain at 30 Parsons Street, and his two straw-hatted sons, Harry and Billy, specialising in pickled beef and home-made beef sausages; next to Mr Jelfs at 31 Parsons Street was Helen Morris, the High-Class Ladies and Children's Hairdresser, who specialised in Marcel waving and face massage and who for some reason beyond me was the source of much adult 'speculation'. Other people in 'The Bar', as my family called the area, whom I knew well, were Percy Gilkes, the printer and newsagent on the corner at 32 Parsons Street; next to him were Wyncoll's, the florist and fruiterers at 56 North Bar. Opposite them at 8 North Bar lived the Hawtin Brothers who were plumbers and builders and whose unmarried sisters, Winifred, Rosy and Ada were particular friends of my aunt and would come to tea at least once a fortnight. Among others on that side of 'The Bar' was the Ruyard Commercial Hotel and Cafe at 10 North Bar kept by Mrs Sansbury; Tod Stranks, next door at his Hotel *The Regal* (now *Cromwell*

*Lodge*); Mr Booth at Number 19, also a builder and general merchant, and Thomas Humphris at number 33, the mattress maker; William and Thomas Bolton at number 34, electrical engineers, whilst at 34a was Mr Johnson and his leather works. At the bottom of 'the Bar' in North Bar Place was yet another builder, Percy Alcock, whose firm was to grow to be the biggest builders in the Banbury area. At 42 North Bar lived Dr William Alban Ball, a cadaverous bachelor vet and a great favourite of my grandfather's because of his mordant wit. Nearby at 43 were Bennetts the decorators and heating engineers whose daughter's birthday parties I attended. At 46 was Harry Coleman, the hairdresser where I went for my fortnightly trim. Next door at number 47 lived a family I was particularly friendly with, the Boltons, who were long-established wool staplers. Norman Bolton had three sons about my age, Kenneth, Richard and Philip. We would play hide and seek among the wool bales. The most vivid memory I have of this family however is of the old grandfather: John Henry Bolton, having suffered a stroke whilst out walking, was brought home by a crowd of men as he sat upright on one of my grandfather's shop trucks covered in blood where he had fallen. He died shortly afterwards.

I can recall the old smells of the area as one walked through it: the steaming manure of the huge dray horses which dragged cartloads of barrelled beer to the *Dog and Gun* and the *Buck and Bell*; the warm smell of the beer and stout in the summer from these pubs mixed with the smell of exotic spices from Miss Wheeler's shop; and above all the smell from our shop of sawdust and of ground coffee which was roasted in a window with a small ventilator which emitted a keen tang of coffee each day.

### **The Knowle, North Newington**

Because we lived in an apartment in the town my grandfather thought, coming himself from the small village of Kencott in west Oxfordshire, that the family should have some experience of country living and country air. Accordingly, for several years in the 1930s, he rented half The Knowle at North Newington from April until the end of September from the Hutchins family who were farmers. My mother and I were despatched to live there and I came back to Miss Mellors' School each day on the Midland Red bus. The farmer and his wife cooked our meals, and my aunt and grandfather retreated there and joined us for bucolic weekends. There I was able to mix with the country children and farm workers who had a language of their own with its gruff laconic wisecracks and sly intimate examples of country lore. I also became knowledgeable about such country pursuits as birds nesting, poaching, following the hunt and generally making a nuisance of myself on the farm, particularly at thrashing time. There was a pit near The Knowle where the stones to build the house had been quarried and which provided an excellent adventure playground for me and my village friends. I helped feed the chickens and cattle. Regretfully there were no horses.



However, I also had, along with the farmer's granddaughter, Beryl, a half share in a donkey, and kept two rabbits. For the grownups, including members of the Wellbank family, who frequently visited us, there was a tennis court.

It was during one of these summers at The Knowle that an event took place which might have had serious consequences for myself. I caught the Midland Red bus in Banbury after school and sat in the front seat next to a young woman, a Mrs Gibbs, formerly Miss Gould. I alighted at The Knowle and the bus trundled on to Shutford, the next village. As the bus stopped opposite the church there, unknown to Mrs Gibbs, her husband was waiting in a barn - on the left overlooking the bus stop, and pushing his rifle through one of the barn lights he shot and killed her and injured several other people on the bus. He did this because he believed she had committed adultery. He then shot himself. If I had been on the bus I would most probably have been seriously injured. Far from this incident curtailing my freedom it was a source of a certain amount of notoriety in the family which my grandfather delighted in telling his friends.

As well as our life at The Knowle the family had two weeks away at the sea each year. Usually we went to various south coast resorts - Westcliffe, Clacton, Cliftonville and Weymouth. This involved massive, well-labelled trunks being despatched ahead and the family being conveyed by one of Mr Trinder's hire cars to the station, and exciting taxi drives across London between stations.

### **Life in the town**

Looking back on my childhood in Banbury - which might have been anywhere in the 1930s - what I most remember is the sense of safety. From the age of six I went to school alone. I played in the local streets (cul de sacs were especially good for roller skating) and wandered all over the town, although I was told to keep away from the roughest part of the town, then judged to be Boxhedge and Neithrop. I had a scooter from the age of five, and later a small cycle, and had the freedom of Banbury. There were plenty of advantages the children of my generation didn't have, but we did have freedom. We had freedom from fear. We thought most strangers could be trusted and we had freedom of movement, and freedom to roam and discover the world, and even freedom to take risks. There were the parks, there was the canal where we tried to cadge lifts on the barges carrying coal, heavy goods or grain. We did keep to the town side of Grimsbury although we viewed the steam trains from the bridge. There were also errands to run. For example, if an important grocery order was being made up in the warehouse, and the shop lacked an item I would be despatched to my grandfather's great rival, Ernest Butler's at 4 High Street, to buy it and save the honour of the firm. I also went out on the delivery van until I made a nuisance of myself and was banned. Sometimes I ran alongside our errand boys as they trundled their big cycles with square baskets filled with groceries on the front, up South Bar. With my aunt I visited the cinema from time to time and recall seeing

George Arlis in *The Iron Duke* at the old Palace Cinema in the Market Square with its 1920's art deco lamps and brass jardinières with palms and lush red carpets everywhere. But of more interest to my friends and I was the visit of Bertram Mills Circus. The big tent was pitched on the Harriers Field, but of even more interest to us were the circus vans and animals which came first to the railway station. My mother could recall how she had met, and shaken hands with Buffalo Bill when, as William Cody, he had come to Banbury nearly forty years before. For my generation however the visit of Bertram Mills Circus was THE event of 1934.

### **Life at home**

Few tradesmen today even in small towns still live above or behind their own shops in the centre of towns. Yet for me there was a great excitement in living over a family business and being at the centre of something important. I know my aunt missed it very much when we left Banbury. At Christmas, for example, the business particularly came alive when extra staff were taken on. There were big orders to be made up; the shop was decorated with holly and ivy and special vivid tins of tea and biscuits, boxes of crackers and mince pies, dates, crystalised fruits and christmas cakes were on special display. It seemed as if barrows lined every pavement, their flaring acetylene lamps illuminating whole landscapes of items never seen at other times; banks of dark brown chestnuts, silver balls of wrapped tangerines, exotic pink pomegranates and coconuts with faces like tiny monkeys.

My recollections of the apartment over the shop were of an old-fashioned but spacious and solidly comfortable home with heavy, mahogany Victorian furniture - a sideboard, a davenport, a couch upholstered in red plush, a whatnot, silver ornaments, dark red velvet curtains with tassels and fringes, a Turkish-type square carpet, and white marble fireplaces with roaring fires in winter and lots of brass fenders and fire dogs to be polished. There was no central heating of course, no wall to wall carpets, no fridge, let alone a washing machine. It did have both a dining room and 'drawing room', and a chaotic 'play room' for myself. We had a gas stove and also an old-fashioned oven heated by the kitchen fire. 'Downstairs' and in the warehouse all was a hive of activity. At that time, ten people were employed in the shop, the warehouse, and as van drivers as well as an unknown number of errand boys. My grandfather's shop for me had a romantic appearance. The business had enjoyed a golden age for 25 years until the first world war, after that it slowly declined.

The retail shop retained its traditional appearance. Outside it had black and gold bevelled glass signs 'Family Grocers', 'Tea Blenders', 'Provision and Wine and Spirit Merchants'; whilst inside it had long carved mahogany counters and old glass showcases with banks of small spice drawers for nutmeg, root ginger, turmeric, mace, etc, brass scales, bins for keeping dried fruit in, and green and

gold numbered cannisters for the various teas. There were rows of glass-topped biscuit tins in a wooden stand, and a marble provision counter complete with red and white enamel bacon slicer, for easy cleaning, muslin-covered bacon (bacon was cut to whatever thickness the customer required), cheese wires to cut the cheeses, with a handle at each end, butter pats, and scales with a flat, china weighing pan and brass dolly weights. The floor was covered with sawdust and in the summer the shop doors were opened to keep the building cool and the green sun blinds would be pulled down. On very hot days water would be swilled on to the floor to keep the temperature down, and a bowl of water put down for customers' dogs. In winter the shop was cold, with only two oil stoves to heat it and one of these was in the office behind the frosted glass partition. It was there where my aunt Mabel took turns with a Miss Williams to sit on a high stool and 'do the books'. They also manned a telephone (Banbury 2313) which consisted of a heavy, black upright stand on which was the dial and the mouthpiece, and from which hung the separate earpiece from a hook at the side. Coloured advertisements for certain select lines were displayed, and the shop had several hooped-backed chairs for the convenience of customers. Overall hung the various aromas associated with the trade - spices, cheeses, beeswax polish used on the woodwork, and above all coffee which was ground and roasted in one corner at intervals during the day on a large machine with a brass top and a big wheel at the side. By contrast with the interesting interior of the shop my grandfather avoided elaborate window displays. On the principle that someone would have to eat it he avoided putting anything edible on display. Some restrained show cards or dummy bottles of wines and spirits with muted crepe paper designs were his limit.

My grandfather, known to his employees as 'the Governor', was a small man with, so it seemed to me, strong though small hands. He had a quick repartee based on a play on words and long-remembered sayings and proverbs. Some of his remarks would be considered politically incorrect today. For example, his saying that one should never run after a bus or a pretty woman - because another would be along in five minutes!

Tuesday afternoon was early closing day and quite rigorously observed by virtually all businesses in Banbury. It was the usual practice of my grandfather, if the weather was fine, to take the family, for what he quaintly called 'a Motor Drive' around the surrounding countryside in his upright, 12 horse power Vauxhall car with its fluted bonnet and black and red trim. We took our tea with us on these expeditions.

My grandfather had a number of accomplishments which recommended him to a fatherless boy. We had three deep falls of snow in the winters in my years in Banbury and he made me a very effective sledge. He also revealed himself as an excellent maker of Go-Karts or 'little trucks' as he called them, and made me two, with steering and even a brake. One we painted red, the other green. These

trucks consisted of four wheels complete with axles from old prams, a wooden plank as a chassis, a right-handed swivel at the front to which the front wheels were fastened, the whole contraption being topped off by a large box attached to the chassis with a seat in it. There was a step for a passenger to stand on at the back and the machine was guided by a rope or by the feet placed each side of the front swivel. With these my popularity amongst my friends increased considerably.

From what I gathered his father, George Dossett, the village baker at Kencott, had made him and his brothers similar trucks in the 1860s. My grandfather's mid-nineteenth century upbringing was revealed in his superstitions. If there was a bad thunderstorm and the sky darkened overhead he would enquire, half in jest and half seriously, if it was 'the Last Day', ie, the Day of Judgement. He always insisted on calling the railway 'the line of rail' and not the railway line. He thought any illness could be cured by bread cut into small, neat squares and soaked in warm bowls of sugared milk. If I lost my temper he would admonish me by reciting a poem, the origins of which I do not know.

A hasty temper never show,  
Nor strike your little friend a blow.  
Far better wait til you are cool,  
And then half kill the little fool

In 1937 my grandfather gave up active participation in the business and retired to Witney where he had relatives. The shop was to continue under his name until it finally closed in 1973 and the building was demolished. It was with mixed emotions that I watched my mother's piano coming out of the drawing room window and being loaded into Mr Chapman's blue and cream pantechicon on 16th March 1937. I could not sleep on my first night in Witney in a rural part of the town not because of the excitement of the move but because of the silence - I missed the sounds of revelry and the raucous shouts and fights from the Dog and Gun and the Buck and Bell in The Bar!

## Notes

- 1 For further historical details on the firm and family of Dossett, see 'Portrait of a Country Grocers', *Cake and Cockhorse*, 11.3 (Summer 1989).
2. The Banbury Museum displays a number of artefacts relating to Dossett's business
3. A plaque, 'Dossett's Corner 1887', indicates where the shop stood on the corner of North Bar and Parsons Street and commemorates the name by which that part of Banbury was known for many years.
4. The family grave is in Banbury cemetery and the inscription remains clear.

## Book Reviews

**Shenington: A Pictorial Heritage**, Nan Clifton, 1995, 44 pp., £3 50 (+ 50p p&p, the author, Windwistle, The Green, Shenington, Banbury OX15 6NE)

**Hornton: Recollections of an Oxfordshire Village and its people**, Arthur Miles, Fir Tree Press (Greenways, Warmington, Banbury OX17 1BU), 1992, 54 pp., £3 50 (+ 50 p p&p)

I delight in old photographs and turning the pages of *Shenington: A Pictorial Heritage* by Nan Clifton was a treat. All those faces gazing out of the past: what splendid fellows were the footballers of 1874 in their striped jerseys and stockings; even the 'Shenington Blues' - 'never been beaten' (underlined), seem already to have lost some of the supreme self-confidence of their Victorian forebears. Of all treasured photographs, school groups seem to survive best and here we have quite a collection, perhaps too many, taking up a quarter of the book. What, I wondered, were the aspirations and achievements of all these little people in their starched white collars and pinafores. And how revealing the changes between 1920 and 1940, the first photograph belonging to a previous age, the second pointing to the future. There are some excellent pictures of the village green (the best peopled with children) to compare with its appearance today. If there must be a criticism it is that this book needs a little more historical or biographical background. It whets the appetite but does not satisfy it [but see Nan's earlier book, *Shenington: Village on the Shining Hill*, for that. *Ed.*]

*Hornton*, by Arthur Miles, is a good contrast. Here we have a detailed account of a village with a few photographs (such good ones that more would have been welcome). The first chapters set the scene admirably, describing the work of the Parish and District Councils and improvements in village life, but it is when the author introduces us to the people of Hornton that the book comes alive. He draws us into the life of the village and does it well because he writes about people he or his family knew. We learn how self-sufficient was this small community. If the people needed a place of worship they built it, if the children needed educating the church provided a school, if continued education seemed desirable the gentry supplied a library. It was not only the doctor, the clergy, the farmer and the quarry manager who counted but the smaller men, the ploughman, the milkman, the carrier, the shopkeeper, everyone had a place of importance in that society and at the centre of it all must have been the hardworking wife and mother, though she does not get a mention. This hive of humanity produced its characters (sadly lacking today) like Jack England and Harry Hancock depicted with delightful humour. Arthur Miles reminds us that rural life in the past was hard for many, people demanded no 'rights' but there was a richness there that we may well consider with a sense of loss in our hygienic, bureaucratic, and technological age, more efficient maybe but so remote from the heart of the people.

Both books are very well presented

**Y.S. Huntriss.**

**Faith, Hope and Charity: The Story of Bodicote Church and Parish**, George C Walker Bodicote P.C.C., 1994 viii, 108 pp., lavishly illustrated £8 00 incl UK p&p from the Vicarage, Wykham Lane, Bodicote, Banbury OX15.

**A Village of Great Worth: A History of the Village of Greatworth, Northamptonshire**, Walter Stageman (editor), Richard Fitzgeorge-Parker, Pam Carpenter, Rosemary Swallow 1994 A4 Approx 110 pp £6 00 incl U.K. p&p from W Stageman, Floyd's Farm, Greatworth, Banbury OX17 2DX

Two more village histories which deserve much more space than is available

The Banbury Historical Society was to an extent born in the former Bodicote Vicarage (now Salt Way House), where I had 'digs' in 1957-8 and first collaborated with Ted Brinkworth in the start of our Society. John Carré, then Vicar, became used to correspondence arriving for the 'Rev J Gibson'

Even then George Walker was well known as Bodicote's historian. It is splendid that now, some forty years later, he has put his knowledge into print. There is a wealth of information here, with excellent and apposite illustrations including maps ancient and modern. All is very readable, but as one who likes the minutiae of local history, I particularly welcome the appendix giving the memorial inscriptions inside the church (including, of course, James Barnes, illustrated in *C.&CH* 2,9, p 235). However, I would have liked to have seen some form of bibliography and list of unpublished sources, to help future researchers, and a book with this amount of information really needs an index.

Greatworth's history is the result of another local initiative, this time by a group of local historians. Its A4 format gives it a less 'professional' look but this belies its well researched content, well produced old photographs, maps and facsimile documents. I have a special interest in Greatworth, as, twenty years ago, I researched the occupiers of Greatworth House, burnt down in 1793. One of these, George Montagu, remains well known as one of Horace Walpole's prolific correspondents. Although Pam Carpenter, author of the chapter on the Manor House, does not appear to have known of my article (published in *Northamptonshire Past and Present* in 1976), she has found all the important sources and has been able to reproduce the British Library's Eyre-Tillemans 1723 drawing in a much larger version.

Like all village histories, subjects are expected and unexpected: the 'Miscellany' of stocks, pound, whitsun-ale, bier, public telephone and chapel whets the appetite. 'From the News' provides always fascinating items from local newspapers, 1784-1897, the *Northampton Mercury* and the *Banbury Guardian*. As neither are indexed, this must have meant much research. The Poor, Two World Wars, Education, and the Church are supplemented by analysis of the censuses and a map of ridge and furrow. As with Bodicote, I would have liked an index, but at least each chapter gives its sources.

Both books are subsidised (quite apart from time and effort) and provide outstanding value

J.S.W.G.

# 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).

*Oxfordshire and North Berkshire Protestation Returns and Tax Assessments 1641-1642* (vol. 24).

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

In preparation

*A History of Adderbury*, by Nick Allen

*Turnpike Roads to Banbury*, by Alan Rosevear

*Act Book of the Peculiar Court of Banbury and Cropredy 1625-38*, ed R K Gilkes

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, overseas membership, **£12.00**.

