

CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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Notes for Contributors

We invite contributions on all aspects of the history and archaeology of Banbury and its surrounding region, often referred to as 'Banburyshire'. Material from amateurs and professionals is equally welcome. The Editor will be pleased to send guidance notes to potential authors, so as to ease the process of submitting a piece for consideration.

Cake and Cockhorse

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

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This issue of *Cake & Cockhorse* includes reports on three successful excursions that the Society organised in April, May and June, and on the hugely enjoyable Finds Evening that we held last year. The reports, though hardly a radical departure, are an attempt to include in the journal more news of BHS activities (which are wider and more varied than is always appreciated), in the hope that it will prove of interest to our readers. I can't claim in time-honoured marketing fashion that this is 'in response to popular demand'. There has been no such demand. In fact, I don't really know if members want anything different at all or if they are happy to continue with the usual mix of articles and lecture reports. If you have a view on what *Cake & Cockhorse* should contain I shall be very happy to learn what it is. Please let me know.

Our articles in this issue are an account of the last years of the manor courts in Kings Sutton and a history of Shenington Mill over eight hundred years. Both are excellent examples of what is possible when documentary evidence is combined sympathetically with local knowledge and are, I think, typical of what journals such as ours can do so well.

I have finished drawing up a set of simple guidelines for contributors to *Cake & Cockhorse*. They should make it easier for prospective authors to understand in advance our house style and requirements, thereby saving the time and inconvenience involved in re-casting what has already been written. Anyone thinking of offering us a piece of work should if possible ask me for the guidelines at an early stage (though this doesn't disbar later contributions).

Cover: Image of watermill from Luttrell Psalter (c.1325-1335), BL Additional MS 42130, f.181.

SHENINGTON MILL

Robert Caldicott



Figure 1. OS 1:25,000 (Sheet 191, 1959)

The site of Shenington mill is a gently sloping piece of land at the meeting point of two valleys. From the village of Alkerton to the north flows the Sor Brook which runs on to meet the River Cherwell just west of Aynho. From the west comes the Shenington Brook. Each was diverted by two pairs of banks designed to convey water to the mill, and contain the mill pond. What remains of the banks are still impressive structures providing the only remaining visual evidence of the existence of a watermill. Typically there is a network of rights of way to the mill site, and a well built track from the village of Shenington.

From Balscote there is a steep bridle track down to the mill, deeply eroded by years of use. The mill site is recorded in the Oxfordshire Historic Environment Record as “Site of Watermill and Possible Fishponds, Well preserved earthworks of leats, 2 ponds, soggy now; also remains of stone building foundations and site of mill”.¹

The *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire* (VCH), volume 1, quotes from the Domesday Book thus:

*‘Shenington was a ten hide estate, but by 1086 3 hides, perhaps the demesne, were exempt from geld and royal service. On the demesne were 4 ploughs worked by 12 serfs, and a mill, worth 3s a year.’*²

Clearly then there was a mill there at the time of the Norman conquest and possibly much earlier. The *VCH* goes on to say:

‘Shenington Mill descended with the manor from 1086. Its ownership was divided similarly into fifths and by the 17th century four-fifths evidently belonged to Oriel College and one-fifth to the Goodwin’s manor. This must have been the reason for the later claim that one fifth of Shenington mill was free land, by contrast with college customary land. It was a water corn-mill. At the end of the 15th century the miller was regularly presented in the courts leetfor taking excessive tolls. Seventeenth-century courts record its tenure by the Grimes family, customary tenants; in the 19th century it was held by lease and in 1808 the tenant paid 15s. a year rent and an entry fine of £80. In 1855 the mill worked with two pairs of stones and depended for its water on a few uncertain springs, sufficient for grinding wheat for a short period only each year. It was valued at £54.10s. a year and its fall in value was blamed at that time on competition from steam mills and farmers’ hand mills. Leases of the mill survive up to 1875 but it probably ceased to operate soon afterwards and was not marked on the Ordnance Survey map of 1882.’

Those few sentences cover the eight hundred years from the mill’s record in Domesday until its disappearance sometime in the late nineteenth century.

There does not appear to be any physical or cartographic evidence of mills on the Sor Brook upstream of Shenington Mill, but there are

¹ Oxfordshire Sites and Monuments Record No. 5979 - MOX4138.

² *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire* (VCH), Vol IX. pp 139-150.

documentary references to an Alkerton Mill which disappeared some time before 1778. Its site is not presently known. In his book *Oxfordshire Mills*,³ Wilfred Foreman does not give a location for Shenington Mill, but lists it as ‘possibly confused with Alkerton.’ Under Alkerton, he says ‘Grid Ref. SP379419. Sore Brook. Domestic, ponds lost. There were three pairs of stones.’ The grid reference is actually that of Shenington Mill, so I assume that Foreman has confused the two, and his description refers to Shenington rather than Alkerton Mill. Alkerton lies to the east of Shenington, across the valley of the Sor Brook:

‘Alkerton. In 1310 (the Walton) manor had a manor house worth 6s.8d., and 60 a. still in demesne, but said to be worth only 20s a year, or 4d an acre...there was a watermill worth 13s.4d.’⁴

In an agreement (below) dated 22 January 1778 for the sale of the Manor and Lordship of Alkerton, its Mill is referred to as no longer in existence. Shenington Mill survived another hundred years or so.

‘The small number of farmers made it relatively easy to inclose in 1777...a casualty of the re-organisation following enclosure may have been the mill...it was recorded in 1624, and in early 18th-century deeds, but had disappeared by 1778.’⁵

‘All that the Manor and Lordship of Alkerton in the county of Oxford...Also all that capital messuage or Manor House...and Also two several closes or old inclosed grounds with their and every of their appurtenances late in the occupation of Daniel Shellscock and now of Richard Boxtan... And Also all that Toft or parcel of land whereon a water corn mill heretofore stood.’⁶

A mile downstream of Shenington Mill on the Sor Brook is Balscott⁷ Mill, which still has its leat, millpond and machinery with two stones. It was part of the estate of Wroxton Priory, acquired after the Dissolution by Sir Thomas Pope, the founder of Trinity College, Oxford. There are references to it in the Minutes of College Meetings:

³ Wilfred Foreman, *Oxfordshire Mills*, Phillimore (1983).

⁴ *VCH Oxfordshire*, Vol. IX pp 44-53.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Oxfordshire History Centre, Cowley, Oxford. (OHC) J.III/c/1 Sale of the Manor and Lordship of Alkerton by the Revd John Capel Townshend to William Sharpe of Upton in the Parish of Ratley, for the sum of £2,925.

⁷ No attempt has been made to standardise spelling of Balscote, Balscott etc.

‘At a meeting held in the Bursary March 24 1854...a grant of £40 was made to Mr Miller of Balscot Mill in consideration of the large sum laid out by him in repairing the mill. This grant was in addition to a former grant of £150.

‘June 9 1879. That Mr. R. Miller be accepted as tenant of the College at Balscott in the place of his late father Mr. J. Miller.’⁸

The present owners purchased it from Trinity in the 1970s. They have preserved the surviving machinery and outside works, and hope to restore them. There are several other mills further downstream, before the Sor Brook flows reaches the River Cherwell.

There is no record of any mill upstream of Shenington Mill on the Shenington Brook to the west.

Evidence from Maps

Figure 1 (page 70) is from OS Landranger Sheet 206, and shows the banks running from the north which diverted the Sor Brook into the mill pond. The banks running from the west, bringing water from the Shenington Brook, have largely been ploughed out.

Figure 2 (below) is from a 1781 Survey for Oriel College, Oxford. It shows the mill and other buildings, with the two mill leats in action. No water shown in the courses of the brooks lying to the south and east of the leats.



⁸ Trinity College, Oxford, Archives.

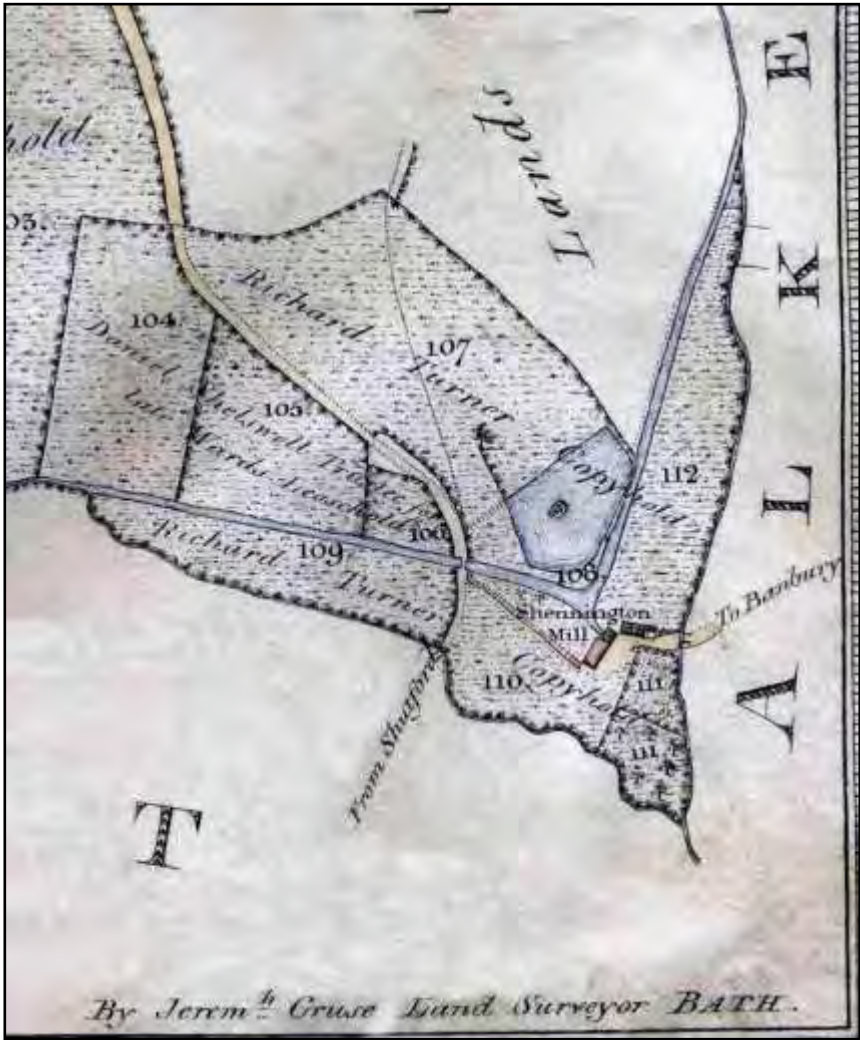


Figure 3. Thirty years later than Figure 2, this 1813 Survey for Oriel College gives a clear idea of the layout of the mill and land around. The occupant at this time (see page 77) was Richard Turner, who also had a saddler's shop in Shenington.

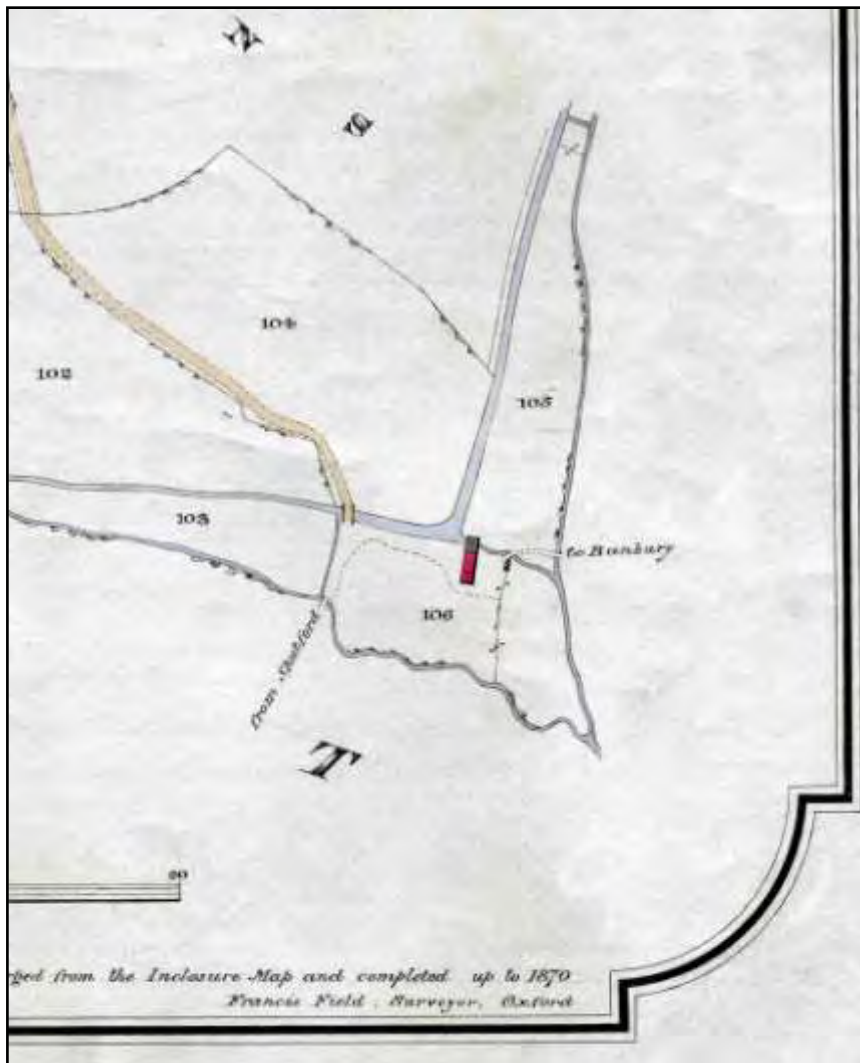


Figure 4. From an 1870 Survey for Oriel College, showing the mill buildings still present.



Figure 5. This view of the area, from the 1882 OS 6" map, appears to show that the mill buildings have now gone. The outlet watercourse and the orchard remain.

‘From the 16th century Oriel College began to acquire land in Shenington, but kept none in hand. By 1619 there were 20 tenants of the College manor, holding about 16½ yardlands, 4 cottages and other small parcels of land, and the mill.’⁹

Oriel College held some leases from the early nineteenth century, and maps and surveys of its properties in Shenington include those from 1781 (Figure 2), 1813 (Figure 3) and 1870 (Figure 4). They reveal, for example, that on 10 October 1808 Richard Turner of Neithrop, yeoman, took a 99-year lease of the mill, land, buildings and three hams formerly leased to Samuel Simson, Oriel keeping the timber. He agreed ‘not to lop or top or stump any maiden tree’, but Oriel would ‘allow sufficient rough timber’ for the repair of the premises.¹⁰ In 1813 (see Figure 3) Richard Turner was tenant of a saddler’s shop and garden in Shenington, plus the mill. The mill property was described as Shennington Mill (108) with the mill ponds and newly erected dwelling house and Garden adjoining, Mill Meadow (109), Paddock adjoining the Mill (110), Lower Mill Paddock (111), The Meadow (112), and the allotment above the Mill (107). The mill property extended to 9a. 2r. 21p. (less 16 perches for the saddler’s shop), valued at £102.¹¹ On 6 April 1841 John Gregory Plumb became the tenant, renewing the lease in 1841 for 21 years. This lease was surrendered to the College on 1 March 1875.¹²

The 1870 Survey of Shenington (Figure 4) was produced by surveyors Field and Castle of Oxford, based on the enclosure map. It shows buildings much as in the 1813 survey (Figure 3). However by 1882 the Ordnance Survey 6 map (Figure 5) showed no buildings. Together with the surrender of the lease back to Oriel in 1875 (above) it suggests that the mill went out of use and was demolished sometime between 1870 and 1882. John Court, of the present-day Mill Farm, said that he believed the stone from the mill was carted back up Mill Lane to build cottages in the village (see p.83).

⁹ *VCH Oxfordshire*, Vol IX pp 139-150.

¹⁰ Oriel College, Oxford, Archives.

¹¹ *Ibid.*; 1813 map.

¹² *Ibid.*

Other Documentary History

In 1542 Shenington like Alkerton was sold to Robert Hopper of Henley. Before 1601, however, Shenington passed out of the Hopper family, for it was conveyed on that date by William Hawkins, his wife Katherine and son Thomas, to Richard Goodwin.¹³

The will of Thomas Gibbs of Epwell in the County of Oxford, dated 6 July 1730:¹⁴

‘Item. I give and devise unto my Daughter Mary Walton and unto her heirs forever all that fifth part of a Mill and ground belonging thereunto called or known by the name of Shenington Mill being free land which I purchased of John Goodwin and Richard Goodwin of Shenington aforesaid.’

Indenture dated 9 May 1757 (sale by Mary Walton’s son Joseph):¹⁵

‘Joseph Walton of Epwell sells his fifth share of Shenington Mill to James Parker Clerk Rector of Great Rollright. The Mill, is in the possession or occupation of John Hicket(?)’.

Indenture dated 10 May 1757 made between Joseph Walton of Epwell, yeoman, and James Parker, Clerk Rector of Great Rollright in the County of Oxford:¹⁶

‘for principal and interest on a mortgage of the Messuage and other premises hereinafter mentioned... And also All that his undivided fifth part of all that messuage and tenement with the Mill and Mill flume and Ground thereunto belonging situate standing and being in Shenington in the County of Gloucester¹⁷ formerly purchased by Thomas Gibbs of Epwell aforesaid Yeoman Deceased late Grandfather of the said Joseph Walton to himself and his heirs forever and from one John Goodwin and Richard Goodwin of Shenington.’

4. 10th May 1757. Joseph Walton borrows £80 from James Parker, Clerk, Rector of GreatRollright.¹⁸

¹³ *VCH Oxfordshire*, Vol IX pp 139-150.

¹⁴ Oxfordshire History Centre, OIC VII/i/1

¹⁵ Oxfordshire History Centre. OIC VII/i/2-3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* OIC VII/i/4.

¹⁷ Shenington was A Gloucestershire enclave until 1844.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

5. Promissory Note dated 27 May 1757: £6 borrowed by Joseph Walton from Mr. Parker.¹⁹

6. The will of a former miller at Shenington Mill, by the name of William Giles, dated April 1772, who left his estate to his wife Mary:²⁰

‘In the Name of God, Amen. I, William Giles of Shennington Mill in the county of Gloucester, miller, being weak of body but of sound and perfect mind and memory and understanding praised be Almighty God ...do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner following, that is to say I will that all my just debts and funeral expenses shall be fully paid and satisfied and after payment thereof I give devise and bequeath unto my loving wife Mary Giles all and singular my Messuage Lands &c ...standing lying and being within...Shennington aforesaid and also my Messuages, lands...lying and being within the Parish of Epwell in the County of Gloucester²¹ and also all other my Messuages and Lands...and heriditaments whatsoever and wheresoever.’

The documents above suggest that Thomas Gibbs purchased a fifth share in the mill (the other four-fifths presumably being owned by Oriel College) from John Goodwin and Richard Goodwin of Shenington sometime in the late seventeenth century or early eighteenth. In 1730 the share was willed by Thomas Gibbs to his daughter Mary Walton.

By the spring of 1757 Mary Walton’s son Joseph Walton seems to have been in financial difficulties. On the 9 May he sold his fifth share in the mill to James Parker and signed an indenture concerning principal and interest on a mortgage of the mill. There are records of his borrowing £80 (over £26,000 in today’s money) on 10 May, and another £6 (£2,000) on 27 May. Both loans were from James Parker.

At this time the mill was described as being in the possession or occupation of John Hickes. Twenty-five years later, in April 1772, the miller William Giles was in occupation, but in poor health. He appears to have bequeathed the complete mill and land around, together with property at Epwell, to his wife Mary.

¹⁹ Ibid. OIC VII/i/5.

²⁰ The National Archives, PROB 11.976/431.

²¹ Epwell as actually, in Oxfordshire, a chapelry in the parish of Swalcliffe.

The Enclosure Act, 14 September 1780

The Enclosure Commission met at Askell Manor (called the Sun Rising) at Edgehill. The Act includes a reference to a bridge, the top of which can still just about be made out on the ground today:

‘One other road or way of the breadth of 25 feet beginning at the end of a lane in the said village of Shenington adjoining the common pound and extending from there southward...to a bridge across Shenington Mill Pond, which road or way is to be and for ever remain a public bridle road and footway and a private carriage road and driftway for the use of the respective owner and occupier for the time being of the said Mill.’²²

Nineteenth-century County Directories²³ give the following names of millers at Shenington and the other local mills

1864	Shenington Mill.	G. Gunn, miller
	Balscott Mill	R. Miller, miller
	Epwell Mill	S. Ball, miller
1868	Shenington Mill	George Gunn, miller and meal man
	Balscott Mill	Richard Miller, miller and farmer
1869	Shenington Mill	George Gunn, miller and meal man
1874	Shenington Mill	George Gunn, miller and meal
1876	No Shenington Mill	
1877	No Shenington Mill	
1891	No Shenington Mill	
	Balscott, Banbury, Shutford	Richard Miller, miller and farmer
	Epwell	William & Edward Golby

The mill site today

Shenington Mill lay at the bottom of Mill Lane, which leads downhill, south-east from close to the centre of the village. It becomes a pathway across fields to the mill site, close to the Sor Brook.

²² Oxfordshire History Centre 20 Geo.III (1780), c.49 vol vi. 481.

²³ Banbury Local Studies Centre.



Footbridge over Sor Brook to Balscote.

John Court (see page 83), who farms the land, tells me that the road under the grass is firm and well-made. The path continues, over a small brick arched bridge and up the hill towards Balscote, where it becomes the lane named at the time of the Enclosure Act²⁴ as Shenington Mill Lane. The Mill site is 100m. northwest of the confluence of two streams, the Sor Brook, running south from Alkerton and the Shenington Brook, running east from the direction of Epwell. To local residents the mill is sometimes referred to as Gunn's Mill, after one of its last millers, George Gunn.

Nothing of the mill is visible apart from loose bricks and possible foundations. The main visible feature is an L-shaped system of parallel earth banks at the site, the banks of the leats which brought water to the mill from positions about 250m. upstream on both brooks. One arm, running a bit east of due north, still meets the Sor Brook. The other, shorter arm runs west towards the Shenington Brook but now ends at the field boundary. There is also a bank, barely visible some 20m. to the west of the north arm, which might have been a retaining bank of the

²⁴ Oxfordshire History Centre Balscote Enclosure Act and Map, 1805, 43 Geo. III (1803) c.cxlvi, vol.iii.2241.



The north-leet (detail).



Outfall to tail-race.

former mill pond. Local tradition has it that there were medieval fish ponds in the area, like those known at Horley, some four miles to the north east of the site.

Mill Farm

Mill Farm, whose land included the site of Shenington Mill, was purchased in 1880 by the Court family, who had come to Shenington from Charlecote in Warwickshire in 1878. John Court took over the farm from his father. He could remember as a child that there was nothing to be seen of the mill, although it was known to have been sited at the angle of the V-shaped system of banks, at the point where the fall towards the stream is greatest. The stone from the mill was said to have been carted back up Mill Lane to Shenington, and used to build cottages at the end of the Lane.

There is a covered sluice visible below the site of the mill, discharging into a now marshy area leading towards the stream. John Court can remember the remains of a cottage, together with some old apple trees in the field south-east of the mill site. Nothing now remains of trees or cottage.

John said that the leat banks are of clay, covered with soil. The banks running west, now ending at the field boundary about 50m. west of the mill site, used to be of a similar length to the north bank, meeting the Shenington Brook. There is nothing now visible of this extension of the west banks into the cultivated field beyond the boundary, and John says that they have long been ploughed out. The stony hump near the field boundary at the present end of the west banks, is the remains of the bridge over the leat.

The mill is not mentioned in the 1880 conveyance of Mill Farm from Oriel College to the Court family, and it is not shown on the 1882 OS map (Figure 5). It was out of use by then, and the lease from Oriel dated 1864 seems to have been surrendered to the College in 1875 (see page 80). It seems clear that Shenington Mill went out of use in the mid to late 1870s, before the Court purchase of Mill Farm in 1880.

This was a period of great change. Soke rights, whereby a miller had the right to insist that locally grown corn should be milled at his mill, ended in 1871, although no evidence has emerged that this was a factor at Shenington. The Industrial Revolution brought steam power to industrial processes such as milling, and the Turnpike Acts of around the same time were improving road communications. The turnpiking of the



Aerial-view, 1946, showing the line of the western leet.



Aerial view, 1970. No longer any sign of the western leet.

Banbury to Edgehill road in 1753²⁵ greatly improved communications between Shenington and Banbury, connecting Shenington eventually to the canal (which reached Banbury in 1778)²⁶ and railway (Banbury 1850). A final blow to the viability of rural mills was the commencement of the import of wheat from North America. The new roller mills at or near the docks produced white flour much more cheaply than could be done by mills such as Shenington.

The first Shenington Mill was in existence before the time of the Norman Conquest, and employed families and workmen for over eight hundred years, serving the local community. They milled corn, farmed the land around, tended their orchard, even kept cattle. All that is left are the bumps and hollows to be seen at the bottom of Mill Lane.

Postscript

This history started life as a course work project for ‘Introduction to Landscape Archaeology’ (Oxford University Department for Continuing Education). I would like to thank Oxfordshire History Centre, Cowley, the Banbury Local Studies Centre, Banbury Library and especially the archivists at Oriel College and Trinity College for their help. I would also like to thank John Court of Mill Farm, Shenington, for telling me its history in his family’s ownership.

Robert Caldicott is a retired businessman (wine importer) with a keen interest in local history. Formerly of Balscote, near Shenington, he now lives in Warwick in a post-Great Fire of 1694 house. His current research project is the history of the Cappers’ Chapel and Room in the old Coventry Cathedral.

²⁵ Alan Rosevear, *Turnpike Roads to Banbury*, BHS 21, 2010, pp. 34-35: ‘The Drayton to Edgehill Trust’.

²⁶ Jeremy Gibson, *Banbury and the Origins of the Coventry to Oxford Canal, 1768-1778*, BHS, 2015.

The Last Years of Manor Courts and of Copyhold Tenure in Kings Sutton, Northamptonshire: 1754 – 1936

Deborah Hayter

In 1754 Elizabeth Walford and Thomas Jennings came to the Court Baron of the Parsonage Manor of Kings Sutton and surrendered into the hands of the Lord of the Manor, via his Steward, presiding over the court, ‘*all that Messuage or Tenement and Common of Pasture for one Cow in Kingsutton aforesaid and three pieces of Meadow Ground called Poles lying in a certain Meadow called the Long Doles in Astrop Field within the said Mannor Together with all Outhouses Buildings Yards Gardens Orchards and all other Appurtenances thereto belonging TO the Use and Behoof of John Hughes of Cropredy in the county of Oxford Yeoman his heirs and Assigns for ever according to the Custom of the said Mannor*’.¹ In fact they had mortgaged the property to John Hughes for £40 and the surrender would be void if they managed to pay the money back with interest at the given date (it appears they did not).

In the Middle Ages manorial courts like this one had been important for local administration and the maintenance of law and order, but many of their functions had been taken over by the parish, which was made into the main agency of local government by the Tudor state. Many courts became uneconomic and fell out of use unless a particular function necessitated their continuation.² Some manorial courts recorded

¹ This is the first entry in the earliest of the ‘court rolls’ (actually books) belonging to Tim Nicholas of Kings Sutton Manor House. I am grateful to him for allowing me access to this collection of manorial documents.

² A few manorial courts have survived to the present day: the court leet of Laxton (Notts), which administers the still existing open-field system, was specifically excluded from the Act of 1977 which abolished the residual legal functions of manorial courts; a few others continue to meet, in places where they had customarily managed common land, usually for grazing, as for instance in the North York moors. See P. Clayden, *Our Common Land: the law and history of common land and village greens*, Oxon, (2003), pp 57-58; J. Beckett, ‘Laxton’s open fields and Court Leet’, in *Local History News*, (2013) no. 106; also G. Cookson, ‘Danby Court Leet’, in *Local History News*, (2013), no. 107.

the regulation of the open fields until enclosure rendered this superfluous, but there is no evidence in these documents that the open fields of either Astrop or Kings Sutton ever bothered the courts.

There were two manors in Kings Sutton: the Parsonage manor had land both in the open fields of Kings Sutton and in the open fields of Astrop (which was a separate field system though Astrop was divided between the parishes of Kings Sutton and Newbottle), and the Kings Sutton manor was always described as ‘Kings Sutton Manor with all its members’.³ It would be impossible to draw the boundaries of these two manors as the houses and land belonging to each were intermingled in the streets and in the open fields. By 1869 when the records of the Kings Sutton manor (in this collection) begin the open fields were a distant memory and the only function left to both manorial courts was that of dealing with copyhold. There was still a good deal of property held in this way in Kings Sutton and Astrop in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which meant that both manors had to maintain the processes, procedures and records of the courts to enable houses and land to be inherited, sold, mortgaged or divided. Though it is hard to tell from the records where any of these properties were as no addresses were ever given (apart from an occasional directional clue for pieces of land: ‘the meadow next Twyford lane’ or some such), it is clear from a sale catalogue of 1892 with an accompanying map (page 90) that copyhold land and houses were scattered all over the villages of Kings Sutton and Astrop, sometimes thoroughly mixed up with freehold.⁴

Copyhold was so called because the land was held from the lord of the manor and any property transactions had to go through the hands of the lord via his steward, with the transfer being recorded in the court roll as in the example above. The copy of the entry in the court roll then became the title to the holding, hence ‘copyhold’. By the eighteenth century much copyhold land had been converted either into freeholds or

³ ‘With all its members’ translates the Latin ‘*cum membris*’ meaning the parts of the manor separated from the central or main part. It is not clear where these were. Manor, parish and field system were not coterminous here: Kings Sutton parish included Walton (now the deserted village of Walton Grounds), part of Charlton and part of Astrop. The villages of Kings Sutton, Walton, Charlton and Astrop each had its own separate field system.

⁴ *Sale Catalogue* for Mr. Lovell’s ‘freehold and copyhold estate’ of 252 acres in and around Kings Sutton, in the collection of manorial documents belonging to Tim Nicholas.

into leaseholds: it is a mystery why in some conservative places copyhold continued for so long as it did not seem to bring in much income.

Copyhold tenure had developed from the 'unfree' or villein tenures of the middle ages. These were the 'customary tenants' of the manor, who owed services such as ploughing and harvesting on the lord's land, and also various rents in kind. The commutation of rents in kind and services into money payments had begun in the late thirteenth century. By the sixteenth century all notion of any servile aspect of these holdings had disappeared, there was no stigma attached to them, and copyhold land was being snapped up by all sorts of people, from lords to lesser husbandmen.⁵ In the Kings Sutton manor in the 1780s John Willes, Esquire, the owner of Astrop Park and the lord of the manor, held copyhold land himself: he paid 10s. for 'his own', and also paid several other larger payments for 'Wyatts farm', 'Henry Kerbys farm' and several other holdings. He had obviously bought a large estate of several farms but it was all still held as copyhold (from himself).

The rent book which records receipts and disbursements from 1781 to 1827 shows that even as late as this there was a faint communal memory of the early origins of these holdings. The rents are 'quit-rents' or payments instead of labour services, and under some of the names and the rent owed there is another payment listed, such as '*For a pound of cummin seed 9d*'; '*For one Peck of Wheat and Pepper 1s 10d*'; '*For a Gallon of Wheat 6d*'.⁶ We do not have Hundred Rolls surviving from South Northamptonshire, but those of North Oxfordshire record such items being due from some customary tenants in 1279, together with an occasional pair of gloves, and other somewhat random items. Here in Kings Sutton five of the names have 'Glove Money' noted against them, and at the end they are listed together under that heading. Though they all owed (presumably) one pair of gloves it seems odd that Francis Blake owed 3d. for his, Mrs Treadwell, Mrs Williams and John Wyatt 2d. and William Kerby a mere 1d.

⁵ See the chapter 'Copyhold and Freehold' in *The English Yeoman*, M. Campbell, Yale (1942) & London (1960), pp 105 - 155.

⁶ Rents paid in pounds of pepper were quite common in the medieval period, as were rents in pounds of cumin; cumin seems more surprising as this spice has not survived as a common ingredient in English food: see 'The spice of life: the multiple uses of cumin in medieval England', by S. Francia, in *The Local Historian*, (2011), vol. 41 no. 3.

The payments for wheat and pepper continued to be itemised until 1822 when a new steward took over (the handwriting changed) and all the holdings and payments were lumped together so that each tenant paid one total sum.

In each year there was also a group of twelve ‘tenants at will’ listed, who paid rents of between 6d. and 2s. These were the lowliest and the least secure holdings, probably cottages anciently erected on spare land somewhere and a rent taken by the lord of the manor in recognition of his rights over the waste – the roads and any spare corners.

On top of their cash payments for quit-rents and rents ‘in kind’, copyhold tenants were bound to attend the manor court (they owed ‘suit of court’), and they were subject to a sort of death duty: on the death of a tenant the lord could take a ‘heriot’, traditionally the best beast, a horse or cow (called a ‘harrot’ in this rent roll). In these documents this had also been commuted to a money payment which seemed to be variable: in 1737 Mr. Watson’s ‘Harrot’ was commuted to 7 guineas, but Sam’l Betts’ in 1738 was only 15s. There is just one note of a heriot being taken in kind: in the rent book there is a note for 1783:

‘A Harrot for the Decease of John ...a Cow;

A Harrot for the Decease of Wm Pain the best feather bed’.

The heriot was one of the remaining feudal or manorial ‘incidents’ (as they were called), that fell to the lord of the manor. The other was the entry fine that was paid whenever a new tenant took possession of a property.⁷ The custom of the local manor governed whether these fines were ‘certain’ or ‘at the will of the lord’. If certain, or fixed, they were generally rather small, probably having been set in the sixteenth century when prices were low. If they were ‘at the will of the Lord’ the heir to a copyhold could be in difficulties as the entry fine could be set at a level which he could not possibly pay, which would enable the lord to convert to leasehold on better terms (for himself). This led to much recourse to higher courts of law in order to establish exactly what the custom was in each place. In fact it became accepted in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that any increase in an entry fine had to be ‘reasonable’, generally not more than two years’ rent.⁸

⁷ A ‘fine’ in this sense does not signify as our modern word does a punitive penalty; the word is derived from the Latin *finis* (end), and has more the meaning of a final payment or settlement.

⁸ M. Ellis, *Using Manorial Records*, PRO Readers’ Guide No 6 (1997), p 12.

PLAN 3.

Plan
REHOLD & PART COPYHOLD ESTATE
Comprising about
253 A. 0 R. 13 P.
situate at
KING'S SUTTON & NEWBOTTLE,
NORTHANTS.

To be sold by Auction
MESSRS JONES, LANG & CO.,
THE RED LION HOTEL,
BANBURY,
On Wednesday, April 27th 1882,
at 3 O'Clock.

J. Mansfield



In Kings Sutton the copyholds were ‘of inheritance’ which meant that the heir inherited securely on payment of a small fine. The lordship of the manor was really worth very little: in the year 1795 the total of the quit rents for the Kings Sutton manor was £27.4s.5d. and the fines and heriots for the year added 11s.8d., making a total of £27.16s.1d. By the time deductions had been made for the cost of the court, for collecting the rents and the large sum of £10.19s.6d for a year’s Land Tax, the sum total of profit to J.F. Willes was £16.16s.7d. Perhaps the kudos attached to being the lord of the manor made it worthwhile.

The lords of both the Kings Sutton manors had the right to hold courts leet and courts baron. In the medieval period the court leet and view of frankpledge had represented the transfer of certain sorts of jurisdiction from the royal courts to the manorial lord, specifically the maintenance of law and order, but by the eighteenth century the significance of this had disappeared.⁹ The first court in the Parsonage manor book, beginning in 1754, is called View of Frankpledge and Court Baron; the jury was sworn ‘as well for our sovereign Lord the King as for the Lord of the said Manor’; two ‘affeerers’ were sworn (these were to agree the level of fines and penalties); and the constable was elected, but by 1763 the ‘View of Frankpledge’ had been dropped and the court was called ‘The Court Leet and Court Baron’. These courts were traditionally held twice a year at Easter and Michaelmas, whereas the court baron was concerned more with the internal organisation of the manor and should have met far more frequently. In practice, the distinction between the functions of the two different courts was not at all clear, and in Kings Sutton by the eighteenth century they were both concerned only with the administration of copyhold business.

The courts here were not held very often: the Kings Sutton manor held 36 courts in 39 years; the Parsonage manor held 34 courts in the 41 years between 1754 and 1796, and 47 courts in the 63 years between 1857 and 1920. These numbers include the busy year of 1892, when there were six courts in the Parsonage manor and three in the Kings Sutton one: this was the year that Mr. Lovell’s estate was sold up – there must have been a number of new customary tenants to enrol. There were far fewer courts leet than courts baron: the court leet had to have a full jury of twelve sworn in, and usually it was recorded that ‘*the jury being sworn and empanelled find that they have nothing to present*’.

⁹ Ellis, *Manorial Records*, pp 47 - 61.

Just occasionally they did have business to attend to, as in December 1887 when *'they find that the 'Pound' situate on the Aynho road within this Manor belongs to the Lords of the Manor'*. In February 1909 it was recorded that the Jury had *'in company with the Lord of the Manor viewed the Village Green'*, and they presented *'that the same is in an untidy condition and ought to be improved. That having inspected and considered a Plan of the proposed improvements they hereby approve the same and recommend that they be carried out'*. At the next court leet in October 1917 the jury presented *'since the last General Court the improvements to the Village Green referred to at such Court have been made by levelling the Green, laying down fresh turf in places and providing a seat thereon.'* We have no way of telling whether it really took eight years to get this done. After the jury's presentments the court then moved on to the business of the court baron, and it is 'the homage', or the whole body of the tenantry, generally represented by two or three, who present and verify the information needed by the court.

In 1841 the Enfranchisement of Copyholds Act was passed, the first of several permissive Acts which enabled landlords and tenants, at either's request, to extinguish copyhold and convert to freehold (with the consent of the other party). This also enabled copyhold transactions to take place outside the actual court: on the 6th December 1861 the heading is *'Proceedings had and taken under and by virtue of the Copyhold Act 1841 ...before Henry William Bennett gentleman Deputy Steward'*; this is followed by several transfers of property recorded just as if in court. There are also many records which begin *'Be it remembered that,'* followed by the detailed documentation of a property transaction which appears to have already taken place elsewhere, but was now being recorded in the official court roll. In the Kings Sutton manor the occasional court leet is far less frequent than the 'Special Courts Baron': these were not held at regular intervals, but as necessary when there was a backlog of transactions to authorize and officially record.

There is a lot of good detail about the actual management of property transactions in these documents. The rough draft of the Kings Sutton manor courts beginning in 1909 has pencil annotations and additions which help to flesh out what was actually happening. At the 'Special Court Baron' held on 19th November 1909 *'came George Blake of King Sutton ...Butcher and Ellen Blake his wife copyhold tenants of this manor in person and in consideration of the sum of £271 to them paid by Thomas Henry Smith of Kings Sutton wheelwright surrender into the hands of*

the Lord of the Manor by his Steward by the Rod according to the custom of the said manor All that messuage or tenement ...¹⁰ To the use of the said Thomas Henry Smith his heirs and assigns for ever by Copy of Court Roll at the Will of the Lord according to the custom of the said Manor [and in pencil] ‘In token whereof you deliver to me this Rod’.

Whereupon there happens a Heriot by composition.

Now at this court comes the said Thomas Henry Smith in person and prays admittance to the said hereditaments and premises.

Admittance granted accordingly.

To hold the same unto the said Thomas Henry Smith his heirs and assigns by Copy of Court Roll at the Will of the Lord according to the custom of the sd Manor and by the accustomed heriots, rents, duties, suits and services. Fealty respited.

[and in pencil again] *‘In token whereof I deliver to you this Rod’.*

In most court records (as in the fair copy of this one) it is not at all clear exactly what was being done with ‘the Rod’. But here the ritual is clearly seen: when a house or land is being surrendered into the hands of the lord the tenants hand over the rod to symbolize it, and the lord (via his steward) then hands the rod over to the incoming tenants. In this case George and Ellen Blake sold their property to Thomas Smith for £271 and had to pay a heriot to the lord as they left the manor (even though they had not died). It is not clear how much this would have been: a bill book for the 1890s shows heriots being charged at between £1 and £10. The incidental expenses to the incomer (tenant of the manor, but owner of the property) were tiny in comparison to the purchase price: his annual rent was 1s.8d. and his entry fine the same amount. Traditionally customary tenants had to swear fealty to their lord on receiving their land, which involved kneeling down and putting their hands between the lord’s hands and swearing a vow of loyalty. This had also been compounded for – every new tenant had ‘*Fealty respited*’. This cost them 3s.6d.

When a copyhold was enfranchised the whole deed was copied into the court record. In October 1871 the Copyhold Commissioners sent ‘*Greeting to all whom these Presents shall come*’. Edward Gregory had paid £17.9s.2d. (the price fixed by the Commissioners), and so the

¹⁰ There were no addresses within the village, so properties were identified by naming the people who had occupied them, sometimes a very long list, here omitted.

Commissioners *'enfranchise all the said Copyhold Lands ...with their Appurtenances.. To be holden as freehold henceforth and for ever discharged from all fines, heriots, reliefs, quitrents and all other incidents whatsoever of Copyhold or Customary Tenure.'*

There is a bundle of notices in the box which show the Parsonage manor inviting their customary tenants to convert to freehold in 1892: *'...you are entitled to enfranchise the same upon paying the Lord's compensation and the Steward's fees. The Lord's compensation may be fixed either by Agreement between the Lord and you, or by any Valuer appointed by yourselves...'*, but there is no record to show whether anyone took up this offer.

When Sir William Richmond Brown bought Astrop House in 1865, he found himself the owner of several pieces of land around his house and park but it was held as copyhold from the two lords of the Kings Sutton manor, Charles Thomas Willes (living in the Manor House in Kings Sutton), and George Shippen Willes of Hungerford Park in Berkshire. He set about acquiring more parcels of land, and also enfranchising it bit by bit. There are several deeds of enfranchisement in the Kings Sutton manor record, one in 1878 for land in Kings Sutton fields, which cost £90; another for a house in Kings Sutton parish for £30.16s.4d.; and another piece for £3.16s. In 1893 he enfranchised what must have been a tiny scrap of land as the rent was 1d.: he paid £2 for that.

Copyhold tenure was eventually compulsorily abolished by the Law of Property Act 1922. This allowed a period of three years for agreements to be reached, so came into effect on 1st January 1926, when any remaining copyhold land was automatically enfranchised.¹¹ Without copyhold, manorial courts had no meaningful function left (with a few exceptions, noted above) and simply ceased to meet. In the Kings Sutton records both courts were still admitting tenants in the customary way right to the end of 1924. Eleven Special Courts Baron were held between the beginning of 1922 and the end of 1924, all conducting business as usual.

The last Special Court Baron held for the Parsonage manor was on the 6th November 1924: Mrs. Amy Rawson surrendered the land left her by her late husband and Fred. Roberts, Ada Blanche Cawley and John Marriott were admitted joint tenants, having paid Mrs. Rawson £3,000 (this was the property occupied by William Gregory). The annual rent was 1s.8d., the entry fine 1s.8d. In the Kings Sutton manor the very last

¹¹ Ellis, *Manorial Records*, p. 66.

courts were held in March 1924 where several transactions took place and new tenants were admitted as customary tenants. It seems extraordinary that there is no acknowledgement that the system was about to come to an end: the only hint is that the last three courts held in the Kings Sutton Manor, recorded as a rough copy or first draft, were never written up as fair copies.

However there were deeds of enfranchisement being recorded at the same time. An indenture dated 5th May 1923 records the agreement to enfranchise Henry Spokes' holding for £20; the lords of the manor keeping only their rights to '*all coal mines, metals and minerals whatsoever, and all quarries of stone*'. There is not a lot of coal round here, but plenty of stone; the right to quarry it (and build the railways and roads to transport it) could be a valuable asset and seems to have been the last of the 'manorial rights' to be given up. In some of the deeds of enfranchisement the tenants had managed to negotiate for the end of this particular right, in others it was preserved to the lords of the manor. These deeds were '*under the authority of the Copyhold Act 1894*', and many involved the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries. MAF was applied to if agreement could not be reached between the parties involved.

The last deed of enfranchisement recorded under the Act of 1894 was dated 31st December 1925 and involved the lords of the manor (of the first part), Henry Hunt, solicitor and steward of the manor (of the second part), the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries (of the third part) and Mrs. Amy Rawson, the customary tenant (of the fourth part). This was the very last day that such an agreement could be reached, and on the next page there is a large heading: *ENROLMENTS made since the first day of January One thousand nine hundred and twenty six, being the date of the Commencement of the Law of Property Act 1922*'.

From this day copyhold no longer existed and all holdings were compulsorily enfranchised, but some manorial incidents still remained. Section 140 of the 1922 Act would automatically extinguish them on 1st January 1936, but until then the lords of the manor were entitled to negotiate agreements with the holders of former copyhold land for compensation payments, and these are written out in full, confirming in all cases that the land was '*former copyhold land*' and now '*free from incumbrances*', but usually with the proviso that it was subject '*to the rights reserved to the Vendors as Lords and Lady of the Manor by the Law of Property Act 1922 and to the Manorial Incidents saved by the said Act and intended to be hereby extinguished*'.

The figure agreed is sometimes itemised, as in Caroline and Helen Taylor's agreement dated 8th December 1927: they paid £16, which was £9.10s. for manorial incidents, and £6.10s. for all other rights, which included sporting rights and the ownership of minerals underground. In the Parsonage manor book there are fourteen compensation agreements recorded, the last on 5th December 1935, which was almost the last opportunity to reach such an agreement. We cannot tell whether all the former tenants had agreed to pay, or whether there were more who just sat it out knowing that the manor's rights would disappear in due course anyway, and we have no record at all of such agreements in the Kings Sutton Manor. Their record just stops in March 1924.

So ended the two Kings Sutton Manor courts, without any kind of flourish or announcement: they just stopped writing anything down as there was nothing left to record.

Postscript: like other old documents these have an intrinsic interest for local historians, who might want to investigate earlier patterns of landholding or simply who owned what and where.¹² But manorial court records in places where copyhold tenure was usual have a legal importance above and beyond their historical interest. For many owners of former copyhold land their proof of title might still depend on the account of a surrender and subsequent admission recorded in the manor court. It therefore became apparent soon after the abolition of copyhold that it was important to ensure that these records were not lost or destroyed, and a further piece of legislation, the Law of Property (Amendment) Act 1924, put manorial records under the 'charge and superintendence of the Master of the Rolls'.¹³ The National Archives now maintain the Manorial Documents Register on his behalf and the basic rules are that no manorial documents may be removed from England or Wales without the permission of the Master of the Rolls (in practice this is never granted), and the owners or custodians of such documents are under an obligation to provide details of what they have to the Manorial Documents Register, though they are not obliged to provide access to them.

¹² 'Sources in local history: finding and using manorial records', by A.J.L. Winchester & E.A. Straughton, in *The Local Historian*, Vol. 37, No.2, (2007) pp 120-126.

¹³ Ellis, *Manorial Records*, pp 75-77.

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An early Court Baron for the 'Parsonage Manor' of Kings Sutton:
 'on Monday the four and Twentieth
 Day of March in the Eight and Twentieth
 Year of the Reign of our Sovereign
 Lord **George** the Second by the Grace
 of God of Great Britain France
 and Ireland **King** Defender of the
 Faith And So Forth And in the Year of
 our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred
 and Fifty five Before Robert Doyle
 Gentleman Steward thereof'.

Banbury Historical Society Finds Evening

Our Society's historical artefacts quiz on 16 April 2015 was a most enjoyable social occasion. About 40 people attending bringing 33 varied items to puzzle their fellow members. Two prizes were awarded, one for successfully identifying the most objects, won by Tom Forde, the other for the most interesting object. This was won by the late Trevor Parry (Obituary, *C&CH*, vol 20, Winter 2015) with a single-legged milking stool which can be attached to the milker by a belt, a practical means of milking a small herd of cows in a field. Trevor acquired it from a Swiss scout at the 9th World Scout Jubilee Jamboree at Sutton Park in 1957.

The variety of artefacts was quite astonishing. A caulking hammer and a gauging rod were reminders of the place of canals in the history of Banburyshire. There were two paintings of the early twentieth century by the artist Charles Windsor (1870-1935). One depicted Paradise Square in Neithrop, a group of cottages that stood on the site of the People's Park car park. The other was a view into the town from Oxford Road near Easington Farm including the water tower that for many decades was one of Banbury's landmarks. Neither picture appears in *Banbury Past*, but it may be possible to reproduce them in *Cake & Cockhorse* at a future date.

Two brass hub caps probably came from a portable steam engine, or even a traction engine. One bore the inscription 'Barrows & Co', the other 'Barrows Ltd'. John Barrows, born in Birmingham in 1833, moved to Banbury about 1861 to set up a business in the Cherwell area with J.E. Kirby who had worked for many years as a millwright in North Bar. Kirby soon retired and Barrows was joined in the business by John Carmichael, and after his death in 1868, by William Stewart. The hub caps probably date from the 1860s during a short period when Barrows was without a partner. In the 1940s the hub caps were in use, with a third that has no inscription, in the carpenters' shop in the Borough Council depot in Bridge Street. They were useful receptacles for drill bits and pencils, and sometimes for glue, and were saved for posterity when the depot closed in the early 1970s.

The third item was yet more intriguing, and raises more questions than can currently be answered. A terracotta (or brick clay) cylinder, with an

accompanying spherical weight in the same material, was part of a Tip-Top Mouse Trap, patent number 144575 of 1910, with improvements registered in 1919. The trap, intended for rats and stoats as well as for mice, also had a series of hooks, now missing. Its workings are explained in detail with a diagram in the patent specification, a copy of which was obtained by the owner. Briefly, it worked by having a bait which attracted animals into the cylinder. When the animal nibbled at the bait a hook was released, dropping the weight on to the victim. The trap is inscribed 'O Wilks, Galley Hill Brick Yard, Banbury', but investigation of directories and other obvious sources has failed to reveal anything about 'O Wilks' or the location of the Galley Hill Brick Yard. By the early years of the twentieth century brickmaking in Banbury, as in most market towns, was in decline, and the mouse trap may have been a means of diversification. The improvements in the patent registered in 1919 suggest that it may have remained in production for at least a decade, but no other examples are known. Any further information will be welcome.

Barrie Trinder

Excursions

Visit to Banbury's Ammunition Filling Factory, 21st April 2016



Banbury's First World War ammunition filling factory, 'National Filling Factory No.9' opened on 25 April 1916, following a visit by David Lloyd George the previous day. Almost exactly a hundred years later, on 21 April 2016, a group from Banbury Historical Society visited the site, guided by Banbury Museum's Dale Johnston, who curated the exhibition 'Feeding the Front Line: Banbury's Explosive Role in the First World War.' The site of the factory, where more than 50 million shells were filled between 1916 and 1918, is alongside the M40, behind the Bowling Green pub. The group had been warned that a sense of adventure was desirable for this trip, as there was rough terrain, and stiles and gates to climb over; good mobility and stout footwear were essential. The hardy historians who went enjoyed their trip around the largely overgrown remains, as it was still possible to see original features of the factory including the substantial earthworks that formed protection around the buildings to guard against the risk of explosions. Towards the end of the war, the southern unit of the factory was converted to mustard gas filling on a large scale, making Banbury a major centre for chemical weapons production, using filling equipment produced by the Banbury firm Samuelsons. Recent work on the archives and on the ground has identified the exact location of the mustard gas filling house shown in a photograph within a 1919 Government report on the charging of mustard gas shells.

Dale Johnston and Paul Hayter

Visit to Fawsley, 26 May 2016



The weather was kind when approximately 35 members assembled outside Fawsley Hall for this outing. Deborah Hayter led the tour and introduced the big house, which had an early Tudor hall with large 18th- and 19th-century additions including a stable block. It had been the home of the Knightley family until the early years of the 20th-century but had then fallen into disrepair and having been turned into a timber factory was almost demolished in the 1970s. It had been much rebuilt and restored and was now a hotel. We walked across the park to the church where members had the opportunity to look at the Knightley tombs and hear about the deserted medieval village of Fawsley – the Knightleys were notorious enclosers. We looked at the site of the medieval village, now mainly covered by the 18th-century lake, and returned to find tea laid out in the hotel, so everyone had the chance to admire the big hall and then relax.

Deborah Hayter

Visit to King Edward VI School, Stratford, 8 June 2016

On June 8th fourteen members and guests met outside the Guild Chapel in Stratford-upon-Avon for our visit to the nearby King Edward VI School. It was fitting that we should mark the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's death by a visit to his school. After the usual signing in we were met by the Archivist and former Head of History Richard Pearson who took us to the Memorial Library built in the early 1920s in memory of Old Boys who died in the First World War.

We all found seats in almost a sea of many artefacts reflecting all aspects of the history of the school over the past two hundred years. These ranged from trophies to record books, and sporting memorabilia to military awards.



The next hour and a half passed very quickly as Mr Pearson gave us an informative and yet entertaining insight into the life of the school since Victorian times. The school in the past was closely linked to the life of the town. If boys did not go to university they often went into a local family business or the NFU Mutual which had its offices near the school. Until the late 1930s the school was partly boarding and until the next decade charged fees.

Two factors have greatly changed the nature of the school. There were fewer than a hundred boys in 1914 yet over thirty Old Boys died in the First World War. At the time of the Second World War the school was almost double the size but over fifty Old Boys perished in that conflict. The Reverend Cecil Knight was Headmaster throughout this time. The burden of taking so many funerals and memorial services was a devastating experience.

Besides the world wars the other factor is that the school is still relatively small but now has over seven hundred pupils including girls in the Sixth Form. Some of the character has naturally changed.

Mr Pearson then told us of the present importance of the school having formerly been Shakespeare's. Distinguished people such as the television presenter Professor Michael Wood and the actor and Old Boy Tim Pigott-Smith have through television and film given great focus to this.

Copies of three fascinating books, all written by Mr Pearson, were given to the BHS Committee. One is a history of the school, others being about the Old Boys who died in the two world wars. Later in the year they will be available for our members to borrow.

At the end of his presentation Mr Pearson took us to the Guild Hall and the Old School where in front of an actor taking the part of a Tudor Headmaster we could experience a little of the Latin that Shakespeare experienced at the same time sitting in the exact room where as a boy he sat.

If you want to share in a little of this go to Stratford on the Saturday morning nearest to April 23rd. This is not only St George's Day but the day on which the Bard is believed to have both been born and died. There is a procession in which all kinds of dignitaries take part. But near the front are always the boys of Shakespeare's school carrying flowers in honour of him who in its early days was the school's most famous pupil and perhaps the world's greatest poet and playwright. It was good that we were privileged in our visit to share a glimpse of this.

David Pym

Book Review

The History of Banbury Spencer Football Club, Brian Little & David Shadbolt, Robert Boyd Publications, 2013, paperback, 128pp, fully illustrated ISBN 9781908738097, £11.95.

This book sat on my desk as the Manchester United managership furore pipped war, famine, elections etc. to the top place in national rolling news. It was a reminder, if such were necessary, of how the language of soccer forged in bites, spot interviews and over-embellished descriptions of basic body movements and errors, have come to dominate sections of the media.

The book is as much about the development of football language as it is about a local team. Copious illustrations, lists, results, cartoons and press comments suggest how the limited vocabulary of the British game has developed.

But where today would we find a team nicknamed 'The Gay Puritans.' Sponsored by a female undergarment factory in leagues full of teams suffixed by key engineering producers?

I am sure that with a few twists of the sensationalist press handle this review could use 'The Gay Puritans', their sponsorship by the Spencer Corset Company and its incoming American owners of 1927 to great advantage. But 1931 was another age, 'gay' retained its seventeenth century meaning, and American industrialists were certainly not focusing on British soccer.

This history of Banbury Spencer FC is by Brian Little, whose dedication to the area's history will be known to readers, and David Shadbolt, who first visited the Spencer stadium in October 1966 to watch Spencer's successors, Banbury United, in United's first season in the Southern League. As editor of United's match day programme he has explored the club's archives for a series of historical articles.

This is a chronological study, from Spencer's inception in 1931 to its final game in 1965 when, to the echoes of slow hand claps, it lost against Brierley Hill Alliance in the West Midland League. Banbury United – not 'Town' – arose from those ashes.

There are few today who will remember the halcyon days of Banbury Spencer, a colourful works-sponsored team and inevitably it has to be the published record that provides most of the text. It must be regretted that Little's legendary ability to tap into Banbury's oral history is not evident here. True, most players have long passed, but some of the impressive crowd that supported Spencer may well be sitting with their memories. In pursuing a brief reference to Labour Party support I was able to tune into a local voice with little effort.

The initiative and steady sponsorship from the Spencer factory might today be viewed as paternalism but then, rather, a sensible initiative to encourage corporate feeling, and to integrate workers (and some players) brought from the North-East. In the early days, too, an Arsenal connection led to some local 'stars'. Key players are highlighted in the text, but the dominant figure is Jimmy Cringan, manager appointed in 1936 and as Secretary and Manager, then Town Councillor, only retiring in 1963. His departure marked the beginning of a move from Spencer to a town team.

Most chapters explain, with clarity, the fortunes of the team in war and peace, in various leagues, and in good times and bad. As an Essex man, it was good to read the, albeit brief, chapter where Spencer reached the first round of the FA Cup but were beaten by Colchester United.

The local historian will note the brave stadium development, the Britannia Club, which helped finance professional football for many years, and the occasional support of the broader community. What comes across most strikingly – even to enthusiastic crowd photographs – is the importance of Spencer as a community asset, a pre-TV focus of local leisure time with its heroes, desperate losses, and the pleasure of wins taken into the working week.

Football history should, I believe, be much more than the history of football games and players. Without supporters the team cannot survive. Spencer FC was a key piece of the mid twentieth-century Banbury jigsaw and there remains an account to be written of how Banbury's clubs, both sports and social, engaged the town and the interests of its politicians and leaders.

This Spencer FC history provides an enthusiast's template for other histories of the recent past to be composed from local records, but the value of still available oral history should not be overlooked. In 1961 Banbury Spencer reached the FA Cup first round proper and lost to Shrewsbury Town 7 - 1. We know the team and their occupations from the programme notes included, but surely there are still traceable family links – and memories – for a team which included an accountant, a bricklayer and a scrap metal merchant?

Brian Goodey

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. Over one hundred and fifty issues and five hundred articles have been published. All but the most recent volumes have been digitised and are available on the Society's website (see inside front cover). Most back issues are also still available in their original form.

There are now over thirty volumes in the records series. Those still in print include:

Banbury Baptism and Burial Registers, 1813-1838 (vol. 22).

The earlier registers, *Marriages 1558-1837, Baptisms and Burials 1558-1812*, are now out-of-print, but are available on fiche and CD from Oxfordshire Family History Society, website at: www.ofhs.org.uk

Oxfordshire and North Berkshire Protestation Returns and Tax Assessments 1641-1642 (vol. 24, with Oxfordshire Record Society).

King's Sutton Churchwardens' Accounts 1636-1700, ed. Paul Hayter (vol. 27).

The Banbury Chapbooks, by Dr Leo John De Frietas (vol. 28).

Banbury Past through Artists' Eyes, compiled by Simon Townsend and Jeremy Gibson (vol. 30).

Early Victorian Squarson: The Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington, Part One, 1835-1848, ed. Geoffrey Smedley-Stevenson (vol. 29).

Part 2. *Mid-Victorian Squarson, 1849-1869* (vol. 32).

Victorian Banburyshire: Three Memoirs, ed. Barrie Trinder (vol. 33).

Rusher's 'Banbury Trades and Occupations Directory' 1832-1906

(Alphabetical Digest and DVD facsimile) (vol. 34).

Current prices and availability of other back volumes, and of *Cake and Cockhorse*, from the Society, c/o Banbury Museum.

In preparation: *Georgian Banbury before 1800: Banbury Vestry Book, 1708-1797 and other contemporary records.*

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 Banbury Museum, Spiceball Park 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 or location.

The annual subscription (since 2009) is **£13.00** which includes any records volumes published. Overseas membership, **£15.00**.

All members' names and addresses are held on the Society's computer database for subscription and mailing purposes only. Please advise if you object to this practice.



Autumn 2016 Programme

*Meetings are held at Banbury Museum at 7.30pm,
Entrance from Spiceball Park Road*

Thursday 8th September 2016

The English Coach in the Kremlin

Julian Munby FSA

In 1604 an embassy from the London Muscovy Company took a 'charryott' as a present to the Tsar Boris Godunov, which has ever since been preserved in the Kremlin Armoury (along with much English silver).

Thursday 13th October 2016

Wellington and Napoleon – a strange relationship

Christopher Danziger

What did Wellington and Napoleon really think about each other? Often their recorded statements do not reflect their true feelings.

Thursday 10th November 2016

Opus Anglicanum and the Steeple Aston Cope

Zoe Boden

The Steeple Aston Cope is a rare survival from the 13th century: an excellent example of medieval English embroidery, usually on display in the V & A.

Thursday 8th December 2016

The Elgin Marbles

Dr Steve Kershaw

2016 marks the 200th anniversary of the purchase of the so-called 'Elgin Marbles' from Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin, by the British Parliament.