

CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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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.

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 well 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).

Junctions at Banbury: a town and its railways since 1850, Barrie Trinder (vol. 35).

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

In preparation:

Banbury People in the Eighteenth Century: Vestry Book, 1708-1797 and other 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 2017) is **£15.00** for one member, **£20** for two members living at the same address, which includes any records volumes published. Overseas membership, **£20.00**.

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.



Winter 2019 Programme

Meetings are as usual at Banbury Museum, 7.30 pm, Access back to normal, Museum entrance from Spiceball Park Road.

Thursday 10th January 2019

The Rise and Fall of Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk (d.1475)

Dr Rowena Archer

Thursday 14th February 2019

Discovering the Broughton Hoard and the Broughton Roman Villa

Keith Westcott

Thursday 14th March 2019

“It will do him more good than going to school”: Child Labour in Nineteenth century Oxfordshire.

Liz Woolley

Thursday 10th April 2019

Reminiscences: Banbury in World War Two; led by Karey Morley

* * * *

Thursday 16th May 2019

Village visit to Charlton: iron age hill fort; Victorian stables; blacksmith's forge and more.

Led by Deborah Hayter

Thursday 13th June 2019

Walking Tour of Jericho, Oxford: originally an industrial area based on the Oxford Canal

Led by David Clark

July 2019. Annual General Meeting: date to be announced

Cake and Cockhorse

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

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Apologies to those hoping that this issue would appear closer to Autumn than to Winter. It has been delayed for a variety of reasons and, though ready in December, we thought it better to avoid sending it out to members in the Christmas postal rush. But what better way to start 2019 than with a new issue of *Cake & Cockhorse*?

This issue focuses on parts of Banburyshire rather than on the town itself. We offer an interesting archaeological report from Middleton Cheney, but the main item is Simon Kennedy's important study of the growth of industry (mining, brewing and the railway) that resulted from the 'ironstone boom' in nineteenth-century Hook Norton, and its impact on migration, employment and housing. One question tackled by Simon is that of whether the boom attracted newcomers to the village or whether existing agricultural workers transferred to take advantage of new, better-paid, opportunities. The boom was relatively short lived but it had a lasting impact on the village, not least topographically. The article originated as a dissertation completed at Oxford University Department for Continuing Education. The Department specialises in courses offering instruction and guidance to adults who would like to pursue local historical research. It would be good to see more people undertaking Banburyshire research, perhaps as part of a course of study; naturally, we shall be delighted if they offer the fruits of their research for publication in *Cake & Cockhorse*. Anyone with material that they think is ready to publish, or who wishes to know if their work is suitable for publication here, should contact the Editor, who will be pleased to advise. Every contribution or suggestion will receive careful consideration.

The Society's programme of winter talks has got off to an impressive start, as the lecture reports within this issue indicate. The new(-ish) audio-visual equipment at the Museum is a big improvement, and anyone who has been discouraged from attending on the grounds that they found it difficult to see and to hear the proceedings should reconsider and come along to try out the new facilities.

The good news is that the building works are finished (on time!) in the Museum – so we can all enter by the proper entrance again with no more approaching along the towpath in the dark.

Cover: Hook Norton Brewery (photo: Chris Day) (see pages 12-on)

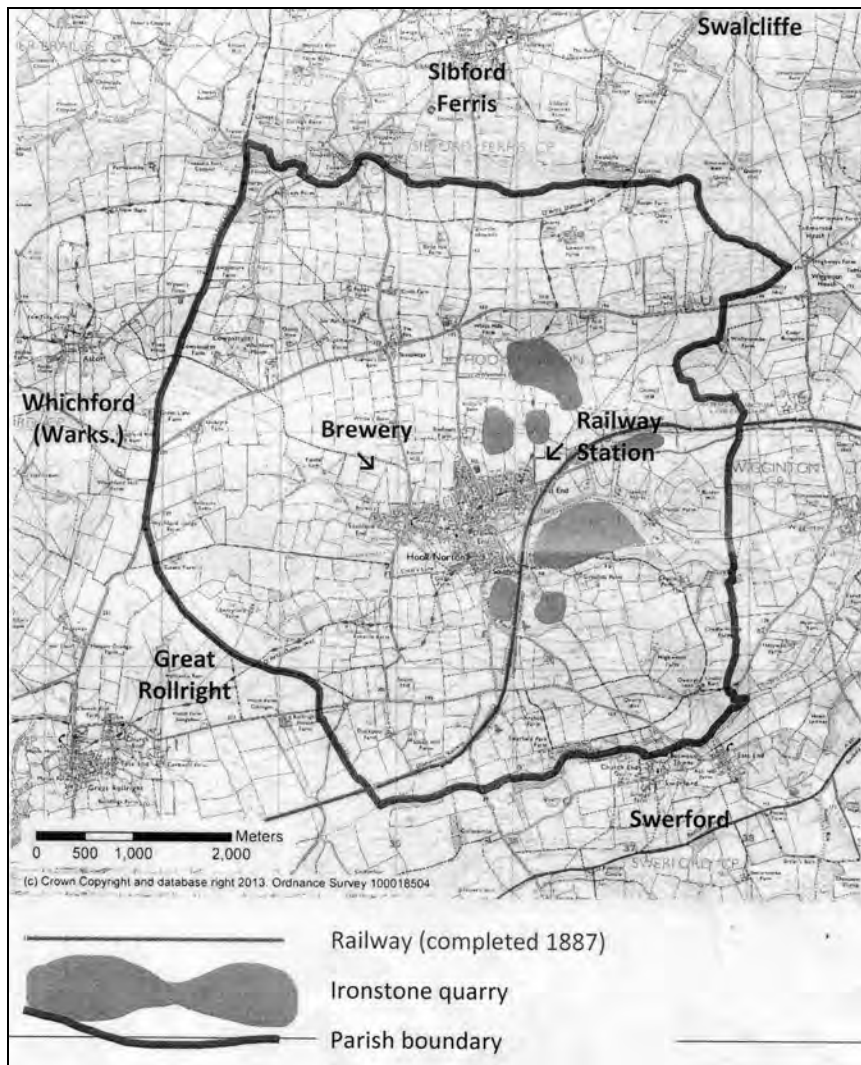


Figure 1 – Hook Norton parish map

Sources:

Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan, 2014 -2031, Pre-submission version, November 2013, p. 4 (Online) <http://www.hooknortonneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/HNNP-Plan-Submission-July-2014-FINAL.pdf> [accessed 29/05/2018]; Eric Tonks, *Ironstone Quarries in the Midlands*, vol. 2, (1988), p. 72.

Beer, Iron and Locomotives

How These Saved Late Nineteenth-Century Hook Norton

Simon Kennedy

‘The traveller does not stumble casually upon Hook Norton,’ as Oxfordshire historian Kate Tiller has noted, ‘rather it has to be sought out...’¹ The parish sits on Oxfordshire’s western border with Warwickshire, with the same-named village at its centre, lying nine miles south-west of Banbury, and four and a half miles north-east of Chipping Norton (see Figure 1). Hook Norton has a history that can be traced from as far back as Anglo-Saxon times. Its traditional crops included peas, beans, wheat, and, most importantly to this story, barley.² Once deposits of ironstone³ were discovered a railway line was built to exploit this resource. That coincided with the expansion of the local brewery. These three new industries – mining, brewing, and the railway – shaped local migration and employment patterns, and through these we are able to examine the push and pull factors on in-country migration, such as wages, family connections and demand for specific skills. How did these factors attract newcomers to Hook Norton, or dissuade the existing villagers from leaving, and how did this village avoid the rural depopulation that struck Oxfordshire in the second half of the nineteenth century?

The primary source of data about the workers in these new industries comes from the England and Wales censuses from the second half of the nineteenth century. The main years examined are 1881 through 1901; with no quarrying or railway activity, the brewery still a small, local concern, and the railway only reaching Hook Norton in 1887, the data from 1881 was used as a baseline. The individual entries from the Hook Norton district from 1871 to 1901 were used to determine who made up the working population, and from there to further identify those listed as working at the brewery, in the ironstone quarries, and on the railway.

¹ Kate Tiller, ‘Hook Norton, Oxfordshire: An Open Village’ in J. Thirsk (ed.) *The English Rural Landscape* (2000), p. 277; reprinted in *C&CH.15.2* (2001).

² P. Ingham, *Two Foot Gauge Rails to the Ironstone: Hook Norton, Brymbo: a History of the Railway, the Industry it Served, the Men and Machines*, Garndolbenmaen RCL Publications (2000), p.1.

³ A sedimentary rock that contains a substantial proportion of an iron compound.

The wage and employment books from the Hook Norton Brewery from 1895 to 1915 provided information not found in the censuses, such as salaries and positions held, and also data missing from the ten-year gaps between the censuses.

The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure's PST (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary) system of occupational classification was used for quantifying the village's overall working population. This allowed tallying and categorisation of the parish residents into seven broad groups: those involved in agriculture (and mining), building and manufacturing, craft trades, retail, service and professional, transportation, and general labourers.⁴ It should be noted that workers in the same company or sector, may fall into separate categories. For example, labourers working in the brewery would be classified in category 2 (manufacturing), while the brewery's draymen, classified as working in transport, would be in category 6. For this reason, when grouping the new industries' workers as percentages of the village's working population they were classified by the economic sector they worked in, or by employer, as opposed to the PST's system of classification by their occupation.

The rural districts of England were transformed in the second half of the nineteenth century by two conditions: depopulation as from the 1840s country dwellers moved into urban areas for improved employment conditions,⁵ and a long-term agricultural depression which struck in the 1880s. While neither was the cause of the other, the combined effects influenced the patterns of internal migration:

With the benefit of hindsight... it is possible to recognize the 1870s as a turning point in British rural history, when the agricultural implications of the Industrial Revolution and the expansion of international trade finally became clear. It was a period in which farming in Britain ceased to be either a major industry or even a major source of the nation's food supply.⁶

⁴ See Sebastian A.J. Keibek, 'Allocating Labourers to Occupational (Sub-Sectors Using Regression Techniques',

Cambridge Working Papers in Economic and Social History, (27), p. 4ff.03.

⁵ C. G. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and Mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century* (1998), pp. 147-8.

⁶ H. Newby, *Country Life: a Social History of Rural England* (1987), p. 104.

Rural depopulation had been a notable trend since the early 1800s. By 1851 half the population of England lived in urban areas,⁷ and 21.5% of the population were employed in agriculture; by 1881 this had dropped to 12%.⁸ In 1851 agriculture employed 25% of all males aged 20 and over, but by 1900 the percentage of males aged 14 and over working in the sector had declined to 10%.⁹ There was an exodus of persons engaged in agriculture (from their occupations if not from their homes) prior to 1871, before the rural exodus had begun.¹⁰ Between 1821 and 1851 a considerable portion of villages and parishes of England and Wales had passed their peak of population, and entered an almost continuous decline in their total populations.¹¹ John Saville put the cause of this simply:

*Rural depopulation has occurred... because of declining employment opportunities in the countryside. Economic activities have steadily moved from the villages and rural communities into towns and urban areas; and as employment possibilities have diminished in the rural areas, the village populations have moved into the towns.*¹²

It was commonplace for many men and woman to migrate during their lifetimes: between 1861 and 1901 38.9% of males aged 15-24 migrated to other counties.¹³ Indeed, some would make many moves in the course of their working lives.¹⁴ The majority of out-migration from rural districts had happened during the 1860s and 1870s, as opposed to during the agricultural depression in the 1880s and 90s,¹⁵ suggesting the rural populations were ‘pulled’ to the urban areas, as opposed to being ‘pushed’ off the land.

⁷ *Census of Great Britain, 1851*: <http://www.histpop.org/> [accessed 15/06/2018].

⁸ A. Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England: A Social History 1850-1925*, (1991) p. 8.

⁹ J. Saville, *Rural Depopulation in England and Wales, 1851 - 1951* (1957), p. 1. By way of comparison in 1885 4.5% of the population was employed in domestic service: Howkins, op. cit. p. 13.

¹⁰ A.L. Bowley, ‘Rural Population in England and Wales: A Study of the Changes of Density, Occupations and Ages’, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, vol. 77, no. 6 (1914), p. 614.

¹¹ Saville, *Rural Depopulation*, p. 5

¹² *Ibid.* p. 7

¹³ D. Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy* (1985), p. 235.

¹⁴ Pooley and Turnbull, p. 63.

¹⁵ G.R. Boyer and T.J. Hatton, *Migration and Labour Market Integration* (1997), <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/articles/541/> [accessed 03/06/2018].

From the 1880s previously prosperous rural districts¹⁶ suffered a depression brought on by the importation of grain from the Americas, which flooded in after Parliament removed the tariff barriers. Added to this were a series of bad harvests. Agricultural rents fell, in some counties as much as 50%.¹⁷ In response to this many farmers changed their production from arable farming to meat and dairy,¹⁸ which required less labour, and for which prices were holding steady. Between 1861 and 1901 the decrease of total male agricultural labourers was just over 40%.¹⁹ By way of example, when one farmer in Thame, Oxfordshire, made these changes to his holdings, he reduced his workforce by 60%.²⁰ Still, from 1870 to 1890 Oxfordshire had one of the highest national rates of farm bankruptcies.²¹

The depression put pressure on agricultural wages – from 1875 to 1887 wages fell by up to 30%,²² but this was not spread evenly across England. In Oxfordshire agricultural wages rose from an average of 13.88 shillings a week in 1871–80 to 14.27 shillings a week in 1881–90, and from there to 14.67 shillings a week in 1891 to 1900.²³ Inside the agricultural sector wages varied widely – the ‘top men’ on arable farms received the best pay, while for those further down the ladder wages dropped dramatically.²⁴ By comparison to urban wages, a crude wage ratio between agriculture and industry of 1:2 existed for most of the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁵

It appears that the drift from the land during the preceding years had, in fact, the effect of driving labour demand, and thus upward pressure on wages, once the depression was under way:

¹⁶ P.J. Perry, *British Agriculture, 1875-1914* (1973), p. xii.

¹⁷ Saville, p. 14, and specific to West Oxfordshire – *Banbury Beacon*, 17/09/1892, p. 7

¹⁸ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural Eng.* p. 168.

¹⁹ Saville, *Rural Depopulation*, p. 15.

²⁰ Parliamentary Papers 1893-4 XXXV ‘Royal Commission on Labour. The Agricultural Labourer. England. Report by Mr. Cecil Chapman... upon the Poor Law Union of Thame’, p. 53, cited in Howkins, *Reshaping Rural Eng.* p. 169.

²¹ Perry, *British Agric.* pp. 134-43.

²² J. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain* (1952), p. 286.

²³ E.H. Hunt, *Regional Wage Variations in Britain, 1850-1914* (1973), pp. 62-64: cited in Baines, *Migration*, p. 332, though this did not keep up with the inflation (approximately 7%) in those 30 years.

²⁴ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural Eng.* p. 95.

²⁵ Saville, *Rural Depop.* p. 13.

*The labourer is generally regarded as having suffered less than any other group from the impact of the depression. Labourers were moving off the land before the depression began, and continued to do so during this period when farmers tried to economize on labour. As a result farm workers were able largely, if not completely, to maintain the higher money wages attained by their militancy early in the 1870s; as prices fell this meant higher real wages...*²⁶

Despite the fact that Oxfordshire agricultural wages were holding steady, if not increasing, the county was experiencing rural depopulation during the second half the nineteenth century: a study from 1914 noted a fall in regions classified as 'rural' from 111 in 1861 to 87 in 1901.²⁷ Compared to other counties the residents of Oxfordshire tended not to emigrate overseas but migrated around England, especially towards London.²⁸ The actual extent of rural depopulation in Western Oxfordshire can be seen in Table 1. The parish of Hook Norton was defined as 'rural', as were the surrounding parishes of Swerford, Wigginton, Great Rollright, Sibford Gower, Sibford Ferris, Swalcliffe, and Whichford (in Warwickshire). All of these had gradually increasing populations throughout the first half of the century. However, this reversed in the 1850s – on average the population of the parishes neighbouring Hook Norton declined by 28.95% over the fifty years to 1901 (see Table 1, overleaf).

Hook Norton was prosperous enough to support a variety of craftsmen and skilled tradesmen. In 1871 there were over 133 trade and craftsmen accounting for over 10% of Hook Norton's total population.²⁹ In 1881, out of a working population of 486 people, half worked in agriculture.³⁰ From 1851 its population was on a similar falling trend to its neighbours until the start of construction of the railway; it stabilised in the 1870s, then began to increase for the next 24 years, as the ironstone industry expanded and the brewery's business grew. Still, by 1901 it had not recovered the population level it had seen in 1851.

²⁶ Perry, *British Agric.* p. xxxiii.

²⁷ Bowley, 'Rural Pop.' p. 605.

²⁸ Baines, *Migration*, p. 234.

²⁹ Tiller, 'Hook Norton', p. 279.

³⁰ When classifying the census data into PST categories those who were listed as 'Living by independent means' were placed into category 5 on the basis that they were perhaps deriving income from land or property rental, while those who were listed as 'Retired' were not included in the working population or categorized.

Table 1:

19th century Hook Norton and surrounding parishes population changes

	1801	1811	1821	1831	1841	1851
Hook Norton	1,032	1,129	1,351	1,506	1,525	1,496
Swerford	327	370	395	441	430	440
Wigginton	192	220	291	327	310	314
Great Rollright	403	362	419	438	459	445
Sibford Ferris township	213	234	216	248	287	350
Sibford Gower t'ship	397	425	494	507	534	549
Swalcliffe	264	290	356	378	338	367
Whichford (Warw)		-	623	583	638	691
	744					
<hr/>						
Oxfordshire (county)	112,194	119,123	138,631	153,567	162,216	170,247
<hr/>						
	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	
Hook Norton	1,393	1,259	1,232	1,265	1,386	
Swerford	402	437	416	387	310	
Wigginton	338	310	265	245	211	
Great Rollright	410	371	388	349	318	
Sibford Ferris township	314	308	267	276	255	
Sibford Gower t'ship	482	449	431	420	394	
Swalcliffe	379	356	358	287	255	
Whichford (Warw)		485	427	404	354	358
<hr/>						
Oxfordshire (county)	171,329	178,329	181,570	188,216	186,698	

Sources: 'Table of population, 1801-1901' in *A History of the County of Oxford: Volume 2*, ed. William Page (London, 1907), pp.221-224.

British History Online

<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/oxon/vol2/pp213-224>
[accessed 27 May 2018]

Whichford CP/AP through time \ Population Statistics \
Total Population

http://www.visionofbritain/unit/10321852/cube/TOT_POP
[accessed 6 June 2018].

The railway connecting the market towns of Chipping Norton and Banbury via Hook Norton was planned in the 1860s and 70s, with the West Oxfordshire ore deposits being a primary impetus. In March of 1873, Horace Lloyd QC, speaking in favour of the line at the Parliamentary Select Committee, said:

*At present, practically this ironstone could not be sent to South Wales as a commercial speculation, for it could not be forwarded there except by the most roundabout route. If the new line were made, ironstone would be sent in large quantities to South Wales, and the trucks would bring back from thence large quantities of coal.*³¹

To build this new line (which would be managed and maintained by the Great Western Railway) the Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Railway Company was formed; in July of 1874 it stated in its prospectus: ‘In addition to the ordinary sources of revenue the line will run for many miles through the extensive beds of the most valuable ironstone... a considerable quantity already finds its way to South Wales’, and on the basis of carrying 18,000 tons of ore a week they estimated an annual revenue of £58,000 a year.³² A subscription for preferred stock two years later stated that ‘2000 men are now engaged on the project’ (200 more than claimed in the 1874 subscription announcement), and the line was expected to open the following year.³³ At 47 miles long it would be one of the longest branch lines in the UK,³⁴ and its construction was undertaken by local men.

*This was the usual pattern on railway construction projects in the agricultural areas of southern England, which were invariably built by farm workers or other labourers who would have otherwise been unemployed. The census lists one or two Scotsmen and several northern Englishmen but there are few (if any) Irishmen at work on the line in 1881.*³⁵

The building of the line did not go smoothly – after 18 months of construction the line was still months behind schedule, the original

³¹ W. Hemmings, *The Banbury & Cheltenham Railway* (2004), p. 52.

³² *Investor Chronicle And Money Market Review*, 25/07/1874, p. 124.

³³ *Subscription for £60,000 Six Per Cent Preferred Stock of the Banbury & Cheltenham Direct Railway Company*, (1876), p. 2.

³⁴ Ingham, *Two Foot Gauge Rails*, p. 1.

³⁵ S.C. Jenkins, R. Brown and N. Parkhouse, *The Banbury & Cheltenham Direct Railway* (2004), p. 43.

authorised capital of £600,000 had been used up, and construction was halted.³⁶ The terrain proved a time-consuming, expensive, and dangerous challenge to the engineers; a total of six men lost their lives in the line's construction.³⁷ After all this the railway station at Hook Norton was opened in 1887. By July of that year the service was running four trains a day in both directions.³⁸ In 1891 the station master claimed 600 to 800 passengers a month were using the line, and Henry Herne, of the Ironstone Company, was quoted as saying that between 3,000 and 4,000 tons of ore were being sent out a week.³⁹

Table 2: Birthplace of railway workers in Hook Norton

	1881		1891		1901	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Birthplace						
<i>Local</i>	0		5	31.25	4	22.22
<i>Oxon</i>	0		3	18.75	5	27.78
<i>U.K.</i>	9		8	50.00	9	50.00
Total railway	0		16		18	
% of Hook Norton's working population				3.14		3.20
<i>Local</i> = The parish of Hook Norton and the surrounding parishes of Swerford, Wigginton, Great Rollright, Sibford Gower, Sibford Ferris, Swalcliffe and Whichford (Warw.)						
<i>Oxon</i> = The county of Oxfordshire excluding the parishes above.						
<i>U.K.</i> = The U.K. excluding Oxfordshire and Whichford parish in Warwickshire.						

Once the railway service was established the staff who lived in Hook Norton were fairly few in number. In 1891 the 16 workers made up just

³⁶ R. Woolley, *Hooky – the story of an Oxfordshire village* (1978), pp. 16-17; Jenkins et al., p. 30.

³⁷ Tiller, 'Hook Norton', p. 279.

³⁸ *GWR Services Timetable* July 1877, cited in Hemmings, *Banbury and Cheltenham Railway*, p. 96.

³⁹ *Oxford Times*, 12 June 1891, p. 8 - it should be noted that this was at least 2,000 tons per week less than the estimate in 1876.

a little over 3% of the village's workforce; five were local men,⁴⁰ three from further out in Oxfordshire, and the remaining eight from other parts of the UK. For the most part the manual workers were local or Oxfordshire-born; the two senior/skilled employees, the stationmaster and the engine driver's assistant, were both born (and most likely recruited) from further afield.



Hook Norton Railway Station

In 1901, at the height of the ironstone quarrying, the number of GWR staff living in Hook Norton had only increased to 18, and they still comprised only a little over three per cent of the village's working population. Barrie Trinder has identified 12 railway staff working at Hook Norton station in 1901⁴¹, so perhaps the additional six who lived in the village were line labourers. As before, half the workforce was drawn from outside the county, and the remainder evenly split between local and Oxfordshire men. And, as before, the senior and skilled men were not native to Hook Norton or the county. In 1901 only two men named in the 1891 census (George Atwood and Robert Phillips, both labourers/plate layers, and local men) were still in the employ of the railway.

⁴⁰ Workers are determined as 'Local' when they were born in the parish of Hook Norton or in any of the surrounding parishes of Swerford, Wigginton, Great Rollright, Sibford Gower, Sibford Ferris, Swalcliffe, and Whichford (Warwickshire).

⁴¹ B. Trinder, *Junctions at Banbury: a Town and its Railways since 1850* (2017), p. 60.

The railway arrived in Hook Norton just a few months before the death of the founder of the village's brewery, John Harris. A native of Chilson, near Chipping Norton, Harris had arrived in Hook Norton in 1846, first renting, then buying the farm of his deceased cousin.⁴² In 1847 a county's directory listed him as a maltster, with another man listed as the single brewer in the village.⁴³ By 1850 Harris had a monopoly on the area's malt production,⁴⁴ and by 1856 he had become a commercial brewer,⁴⁵ supplying local public houses, beer houses, and private individuals.

Harris's entry in the 1861 census does not show him having any employees (though George Embra is listed as a 'Brewer's Labourer'), but by 1871 the census shows Harris had three brewery employees, and nine men and a boy, the latter most likely being farm labourers. Harris's biographer Rob Woolley has said that 'He had become a major employer in the village with most of his employees drawn from the immediate area...'⁴⁶ It should be pointed out, however, that only 2% of the village's working population in 1881 were at the brewery, and by 1891 this had only increased to 3.73 % (as the brewery's workforce grew from 10 to 19 men).

In the brewery's early years Harris did not find all his employees locally; this may have been due to the need for specific skills. In November of 1874⁴⁷ and then again in October of 1886 he advertised for an 'experienced maltman', offering year-round employment and a cottage. In 1871 half of Harris's employees were locals, but this had fallen to 40% in 1881 (see Table 3).

After Harris's death his nephew Alban Clarke began to manage the brewery, and worked to expand both the business and its premises –

*[He] was fortunate that in Hook Norton at this time new industrial tech-nology was providing an alternative to farming, so that instead of depression, the village was flourishing, with new employment opportunities for those displaced from the land - and new opportunities for marketing beer.*⁴⁸

Of the 19 employees in 1891, 69% were locally born, with 21% being

⁴² R. Woolley, *Brewed in The Traditional Manner* (2015), pp. 2-3.

⁴³ *Post Office Directory of Berkshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, with Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Huntingdonshire* (1847), p. 2195.

⁴⁴ Woolley, *Brewed*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ D. Eddershaw, *A Country Brewery* (1999), p. 6.

⁴⁶ Woolley, *Brewed*, p. 11.

⁴⁷ *Banbury Guardian*, 26 Nov.1874, p.3; 7 Oct. 1886, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Eddershaw, *Country Brewery*, p. 26.

Oxfordshire men, and the remaining 10% coming from outside the county. Excluding manager Alban Clarke, of the non-manual labourers – clerk, commercial traveller, maltman, and maltster – two were from the Hook Norton vicinity, one from further out in Oxfordshire, and one from out of the county.

Table 3: Birthplace of Harris/Hook Norton brewery workers

	1871		1881		1891		1901	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Birthplace								
<i>Local</i> 68.00	5	50	4	40	13	68.42	34	
<i>Oxon</i> 14.00	0	0	3	30	4	21.05		7
<i>U.K.</i> 18.00	5	50	3	30	2	10.53		9
Total brewery workers	10		10		19		50	
% of Hook Norton's working population	3.73	8.5			2.06			

Clarke's business plans and expansion proved successful. The number of barrels sold between 1887 and 1896 increased by 61.7%, and from 1892 to 1900 cash from the sale of casks increased by 152%.⁴⁹ By 1901 the brewery had undergone a complete transformation - the new building, a six-storey, gravity-fed design, was the latest in brewing technology, driven by a 25 horse-power steam engine,⁵⁰ with a staff of 50. Of these 68% were from the locality, 14% from Oxfordshire, and 18% from the remainder of the UK. This expanded workforce now made up 8.5% of Hook Norton's working population. As in previous years it was the locals who made up the brewery's manual labour force, with the company secretary, clerk, and two out of the three company travellers (salesman and client representatives) coming from outside Oxfordshire. As to be expected, the brewery hired members of the same families: in 1891 the Beck bothers worked together, as did the father John Wyton and his son

⁴⁹ Woolley, *Brewed*, p. 17.

⁵⁰ *ibid.* p. 92.

Walter. In 1901 three families worked at the brewery: the French brothers, the Messer family, and John Marshall and his son. And, by 1900 it appeared that finally a local man, George Hall, had the skills for the maltman position.⁵¹

Rather than developing gradually from a local concern, like the Hook Norton Brewery, the development of the ironstone industry was rapid, labour- and capital-intensive, and led by men from outside the parish. Geological examinations had been carried out in 1864⁵² and in 1865; they revealed deposits of Marlstone Rock holding iron ore, on the eastern edge of the village. In 1876 these were estimated as high as 16,000 tons per acre.⁵³ Schemes to exploit these mineral resources were dependent on a rail link, and indeed some men were involved in both the railway and quarry enterprises – Richard B. Looker, who was the Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Railway company secretary when the stock offers were advertised in the mid 1870s, went on to form a quarrying company, which eventually became the Hook Norton Ironstone Partnership Ltd.⁵⁴

This new industry had an effect on both the Hook Norton workers and the land owners:

There is little doubt that the arrival of the railway and the subsequent commercial exploitation of ironstone was to have a major impact on the lives of the local people. Employment became plentiful with the discovery of extractable ironstone deposits on a farmer's land. It led to unexpected prosperity. Iron companies would pay around £100 per year in rent, plus an amount for each ton of ironstone extracted. Subsequently, the price of land, particularly that bearing known deposits of ironstone, dramatically increased.⁵⁵

In 1883-4 the Oxfordshire Ironstone Co. purchased land by the sides of the railway track in anticipation of future mining.⁵⁶ As early as 1884, three years before the arrival of the railway, and as the quarrying companies began leasing or buying land, advertisements for local property

⁵¹ Employee and wages ledgers, Hook Norton Brewery. I am grateful to James Tobin, Hook Norton Brewery historian and archivist, for kindly supplying me with copies of the company's ledgers and wage-books.

⁵² *Oxford Times*, 26 Jan. 1895 p. 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ E.S. Tonks, *The Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands*, vol. 2 (1988), p. 73.

⁵⁵ Ingham, *Two Foot Gauge Rails*, p. 5.

⁵⁶ R. Gorton, 'The Hook Norton Ironstone Companies', *C&CH* 9, 1, p. 14; Tonks, *Ironstone Quarries*, vol. 2, p. 73.

stressed that the land contained ironstone deposits.⁵⁷ Even when the industry suffered a downturn in 1901 advertisements for land continued to highlight properties' mineral wealth.

Four companies were originally involved in the exploitation of the Hook Norton ironstone. The first was W.H. Baker and Sons, a small outfit which began work possibly as early as 1891.⁵⁸ Unlike the other concerns, they never built their own narrow-gauge railways, but transferred the ore to the railhead by hand pushed carts; they employed, at most, 20 men and boys.⁵⁹ Richard Looker's Hook Norton Ironstone Partnership was the second. By October of 1898 their works covered around 200 to 300 acres, and employed about 100 men, raising about 400 tons per day.⁶⁰ They also invested in a narrow-gauge railway to transport the ore over their site. The third company was owned by the Earl of Dudley, who purchased land for quarrying near Ground Farm in 1898.

The largest and most successful company was the Brymbo Steel Co., which had its base in North Wales, where it had ore fields near Wrexham. In January of 1888 they made the bullish announcement that they were receiving 'considerable orders'.⁶¹ They began prospecting in the Hook Norton area in 1897, the following year the company leased the 12-acre Park Farm,⁶² and in February of 1899 began operations.

They put considerable capital into the project, investing in workshops, kilns,⁶³ narrow-gauge rail and rolling stock, and a locomotive shed. By 1901 there were 50 men employed in their site.⁶⁴ Their pits remained in operation for the next 50 years,⁶⁵ shipping the ore back to the works in North Wales.

As *The Banbury Guardian* pointed out in 1898, 'labour will have to be imported, as there has been no unemployment here for a long time past'.⁶⁶

⁵⁷ *Banbury Guardian*, 2 Oct. 1884, p. 4.

⁵⁸ Tonks, *The Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands*, vol. 1 (2009), p. 146.

⁵⁹ Gorton, 'Hook Norton Ironstone Companies', p. 15.

⁶⁰ *Banbury Advertiser*, 27 Oct. 1898, p. 8.

⁶¹ *Banbury Beacon*, 28 Jan. 1888, p. 5.

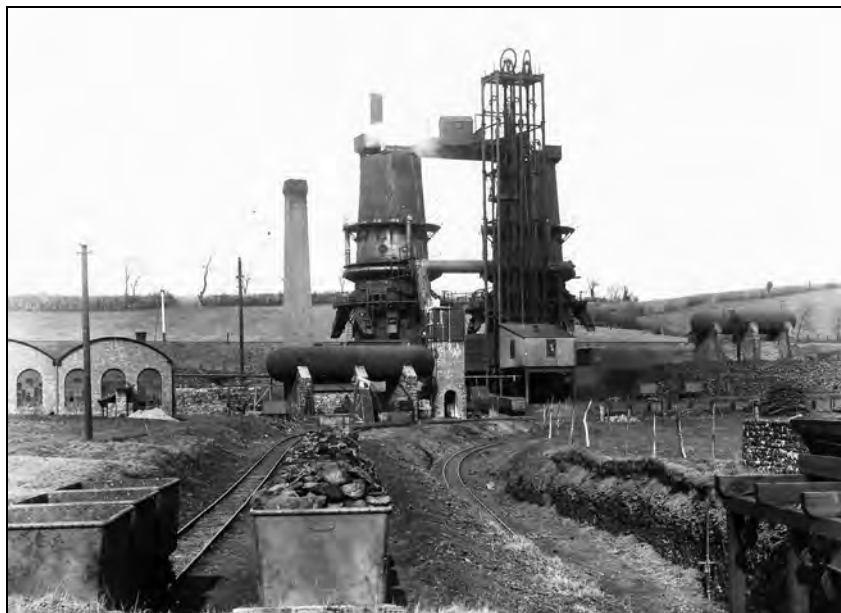
⁶² Trinder, *Junctions at Banbury*, p. 202.

⁶³ These coal-fired calcining' (or roasting) kilns broke the ore down and drove off water, and other waste, thus reducing both weight and bulk for transportation. By the turn of the century the three largest ironstone works in Hook Norton had built sets of these.

⁶⁴ Trinder, *Junctions at Banbury*, p. 202

⁶⁵ Tonks, *Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands*, vol 2, p. 84.

⁶⁶ *Banbury Guardian*, 22 Sept. 1898, p. 8.



*Calcining kilns at the Brymbo company's quarry at Hook Norton. These two kilns, fed by a two-foot gauge railways system, probably date from soon after the company began operations in 1896. Two more were subsequently built but calcining on site ceased in 1926. (Trinder. *Junctions at Banbury*, 2017).*

In that year, to attract further workers, Brymbo built a six dwelling row of cottages on part of the land they had purchased near the rail lines.⁶⁷ This seems to point to the fact that the ironstone boom was attracting workers to Hook Norton, as opposed to simply retaining the existing village workforce (see below). That the new and expanding quarries had made a difference to employment is seen in *The Banbury Guardian*, which stated three years earlier that the building of these works 'is a step to employing more labour in the neighbourhood – a consummation much to be desired in these days of severe agricultural depression.'⁶⁸

By 1893 there were enough men working in the Hook Norton quarries to lead to the foundation of the Hook Norton Ironstone Employment Benefit Society, which had a membership of over 70 men.⁶⁹ By December of the 1898 there were three trains a week, delivering 500

⁶⁷ Tonks, *Ironstone Quarries of the Midlands*, vol. 2, p. 88.

⁶⁸ *Banbury Guardian*, 14 Mar. 1895, p. 8.

⁶⁹ *Banbury Advertiser*, 1 June 1893, p. 8.

tons per week from the Partnership to the Tredegar Iron Company in South Wales, and Earl Dudley was planning to open another pit.⁷⁰

The industry seemed to be gathering even greater pace when in 1899 the *Nottingham Journal* (among others) announced: ‘A revolution is taking place in the Oxfordshire village of Hook Norton, and the Earl of Dudley and the Brymbo Steel Company... are engaged in it.’⁷¹ They reported the Partnership was producing 400 tons per day, the Earl of Dudley was buying further sites and planning a light railway, and Brymbo was promising to invest £13,000 on further plant improvement.⁷² The latter had a regularly scheduled train carrying ore from Hook Norton, utilising the Banbury & Cheltenham Direct Railway, to the works in Wales.⁷³

Yet only a year or so later the industry’s fortunes began to turn. In March of 1901 the Hook Norton diggings were considered ‘quiet’, with Brymbo shutting down their works, the Partnerships works on half time, and a strike just ended on Earl Dudley’s fields.⁷⁴ Two months later the Brymbo workers had been sent to Wrexham, and the Partnership closed its quarries and let 50 men go. *The Banbury Advertiser* wrote:

*Needless to say, the stoppages will be felt not only in this village, but in the surrounding villages, from which many of these men were drawn, and will have an unpleasant effect on trade generally. The men, being on short time so long previously, have but little if any reserve to fall back on.*⁷⁵

By the time of the 1901 census the six Brymbo cottages that had been built to house their employees housed only two miners, with the other four now accommodating agricultural workers.

Yet in 1901, despite the downturn in the industry, the ironstone labourers were the largest group of workers in Hook Norton, comprising 10.11% of the village’s working population, as contrasted to 1891 when they comprised just under 3%. The census data from 1891 and 1901, however, seems somewhat inconsistent with the number of

⁷⁰ *Banbury Beacon*, 31 Dec. 1898, p. 8.

⁷¹ *Nottingham Journal*, 20 Sept. 1899, p. 6.

⁷² *Ibid.* 20 Sept. 1899, p. 6.

⁷³ Trinder, *Junctions at Banbury*, p.210.

⁷⁴ *Banbury Advertiser*, 14 Mar. 1901, p. 8.

⁷⁵ *Banbury Advertiser*, 30 May 1901, p. 5

men working in the quarries as compared to the newspaper reports and publicity of the time. In the 1891 census there were only 15 men listed as miners, quarrymen or in quarrying jobs. A further 19 men are entered as labourers' who may very well have found employment in the ironstone trade.⁷⁶ The situation is somewhat clearer in 1901: there are 57 men listed in the mining/quarry trade (across seven occupations) in Hook Norton, with another 25 men listed as miners or quarrymen in the surrounding parishes.⁷⁷ In addition, the census lists 20 men in Hook Norton as general labourers, and it is probable that they worked in the quarries, and these, along with the general labourers in neighbouring parishes, would cover the manpower claimed. There is also the fact that census enumerators did not record labour gangs in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁸ And, we should note, that the ten-year gap between censuses may have failed to record a 'bump' in those employed in the quarries.

If there was a 'bump' we might expect these men to be transient and most likely single, but the 1901 data shows the vast majority of ironstone men to be settled. Most had families in the village (there were only four boarders, and three of those were management personnel), and were over the age of 25 (their median age was 32.9.). Ten households had two or more members working in the industry in 1901. Twenty-eight men had children, and the average was a family of three. Of the 15 ironstone workers listed in the 1891 census, five were still working in the Hook Norton quarries ten years later.

In addition, the number of 'locals' employed in the industry was growing as a percentage of the workforce: in 1891 40% of the ironstone workers were born in Hook Norton or the surrounding parishes, but by 1901 this percentage had increased to 64.91% (see Table 4). Of those 11 ironstone men not listed as Miner or Quarrymen, only two – an engine driver and a clerk – were from Hook Norton. As with the railway, it seems that the skilled and managerial staff were not hired locally.

⁷⁶ Labourers were also drawn in from neighbouring parishes – in September of 1896 a group of men from Swerford complained that their way to the Hook Norton Ironstone Company's workings was barred by a road closure – *Banbury Beacon*, 19 Sept. 1896, p. 8.

⁷⁷ Seven in Wigginton, 11 in Swerford, 1 in Swalcliffe, 2 in Sibford Ferris and 4 in Sibford Gower.

⁷⁸ Howkins, *Reshaping Rural England*, p. 12.

Table 4: Birthplace of ironstone workers in Hook Norton

Birthplace	1881		1891		1901	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<i>Local</i>	0		6	40.00	37	64.91
<i>Oxon</i>	0		3	20.00	8	14.04
<i>U.K.</i>	9		8	50.00	12	21.05
Total ironstone workers			15		57	
% of Hook Norton's working population				2.94		10.11

Ultimately the question arises of whether this levelling-off in Hook Norton's population decline and then its resurgence in the 1880s was driven by newcomers, or whether it was natives of the village who, as a result of the changing economic opportunities, decided to stay on. In looking at nineteenth-century emigration and migration historians look at the 'push' and 'pull' factors at work on the populace; in the case of Hook Norton we might want to think more in terms of inertia – the 'stay' factor versus the 'leave'.

The societal nature of Hook Norton, noted by Kate Tiller in her characterisation of it as a 'classic open village',⁷⁹ may have aided the capability to exploit these new resources and opportunities by allowing and providing a flexible labour force. Indeed, there is evidence that open parishes 'where a diversified power structure prevented monopolistic or oligarchical control over parish affairs' allowed greater labour mobility.⁸⁰ Certainly Hook Norton 'with [its] numerous farmers, high poor rates, a wide range of rural industries and crafts, many shops and pubs, a large housing stock in diverse ownership, [and] an absence of large estates or resident gentry'⁸¹ fits this description.

⁷⁹ Tiller, 'Hook Norton', p. 280.

⁸⁰ Byung Khun Song, 'Parish Typology and the Operation of the Poor Laws in early nineteenth-century Oxfordshire', *Agricultural History Review*, vol. 50, no. 2 (2002), p. 203.

⁸¹ Tiller, 'Hook Norton', p. 280.

Factors influencing decisions to migrate would obviously include localised unemployment and wages, but we also need to examine familial ties to the parish and employment, and how the age of the individual may have affected their decision about staying in the village.

It was during this period, 1850-1901, that the vast majority of in-country migrants were predominately young, aged about 15 to 34.⁸² In 1914, A.L. Bowley noted:

*A very large number have throughout the last 50 years started their working life in agriculture and subsequently moved to other occupations in the country, in the towns or abroad. At present 17 years seems to be the critical age. There are indications that in the early part of our period many men must have left agriculture when no longer young, whereas in more recent times there is little movement after the age of 25 years.*⁸³

		1891			1901
Ironstone:	Total nos.	15	Ironstone:	Total nos.	57
	Median age	32		Median age	28
<i>Local</i>		6	<i>Local</i>		36
	Median age	25		Median age	26
	% aged 15-32	100.00		% aged 15-32	66.66
<i>Oxon & U.K.</i>		9	<i>Oxon &</i>		
	U.K.	21		U.K.	36
	Median age	40		Median age	36
	% aged 15-32	22.220		% aged 15-32	42.85
Brewery:	Total nos.	19	Ironstone:	Total nos.	50
	Median age	33		Median age	30
<i>Local</i>		13	<i>Local</i>		34
	Median age	29		Median age	30
	% aged 15-32	69.23		% aged 15-32	52.94
<i>Oxon & U.K.</i>		6	<i>Oxon &</i>		
	U.K.	16		U.K.	31
	Median age	40		Median age	31
	% aged 15-32	0		% aged 15-32	56.25

As early as 1891 a Parliamentary report noted a drop in the number of close male relatives in the households of farmers, concluding: '[this]

⁸² Boyer and Hatton, *Migration*.

⁸³ Bowley, 'Rural Population'. p. 628.

appears to indicate unmistakably that the younger generation are not so nearly disposed to adopt agricultural life...'⁸⁴

In 1891, before the ironstone industry hit its peak, the Hook Norton-born section of the quarry workforce was entirely below the age of 32 (see Table 5). By 1901 the local-born quarry-worker's median age had increased by one year, and the younger contingent now made up about two-thirds of the local men. Conversely, over the same ten years, in the group of local men working for the brewery, the percentage of younger men fell by just under 20 percent. While we cannot know the motives of what drew these young men to the village, or what dissuaded them from leaving, there are fewer of them as a percentage of the new industries workforce in 1901 than there were in 1891. At the brewery this might be explained by the continuity of employment offered by a small and established family business. In the case of the quarrymen and miners this might be explained by younger men moving into Hook Norton and staying on. In any case, in both industries the median age of the local workers tended to rise by about a year in that decade, while the median age of the incomers dropped considerably, which may indicate a 'stay' factor for the existing workers, and those migrating into the village.

Familial bonds undoubtedly played a part in keeping men in the parish; as we have seen in the brewery and in the ironstone industry, there were both fathers and sons, and sets of brothers working for the same company, or at least in the same industry. There were, in 1901, ten Hook Norton households whose members worked in different industries, (including at least one whose head worked in agriculture, but whose sons worked in the quarries and at the brewery respectively.)

Familial ties for some of the workers went back further than a single generation and would indicate deep ties with the village. In 1891, of the six ironstone workers who were born locally, three had fathers who were also born in Hook Norton. In the 1901 census, of the 37 locally born ironstone workers 19 had fathers who were also born locally; the majority of these fathers were agricultural workers, but among them were two general dealers, two railway labourers, a carpenter, and a wheelwright. As might be expected, a higher percentage of the brewery workers had multi-generational ties to the village: in 1891 eight of the

⁸⁴ Parl. Papers 1893-4 CVI, p. 333: cited in Howkins, *Reshaping Rural Eng.* p. 172

13 locally born employees had fathers who were born in the parish. Ten years later 22 of the 34 locally born brewery workers had fathers born in the parish. These two, and, in some cases, three-generational Hook Norton families would certainly indicate extended family groups in the village and may be a cause of a migratory gravitational ‘pull/stay’, (as opposed to migratory ‘push/leave’).

Wages, or the lack of them, made up a large part of the push/pull drive on migration. By the time of the ironstone boom in Hook Norton the unemployment caused at the beginning of the agricultural depression seems to have abated. As seen previously, wages in this sector, as an indicator of the supply of labour, had been rising in Oxfordshire.⁸⁵ Against these statistics, though, one local commentator noted that in 1892 agricultural workers were making 3 shillings a week less than they had been in 1883.⁸⁶ Tellingly, in 1890, one Oxfordshire farmer noted that there had been sufficient labour at the beginning of the harvest season and another that ‘labour was plentiful’,⁸⁷ which may indicate that low wages did not necessarily denote there was significant unemployment.

In 1895 the Hook Norton brewery was paying, on average, about 12 shillings a week,⁸⁸ 2 shillings a week less than those working in agriculture. In the following five years wages had risen,⁸⁹ so that the employees of the brewery in 1901 were making the same, on average, as farm workers. It was, however, the ironstone quarries that paid well in excess of what an agricultural labourer might earn. The Hook Norton Ironstone Partnership claimed in 1899 that it paid its men between 18 shillings and 20 shillings a week, with the reporter adding:

*They are a fine, healthy and strong set of labourers, and their wages must bear very favourable comparison with those obtained in the district as it is most difficult to secure labour for other employments anywhere in the neighbourhood of Hook Norton.*⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Baines, *Migration*, p. 332.

⁸⁶ *Banbury Beacon*, 17 Sept. 1892, p. 7.

⁸⁷ *Oxford Journal*, 27 Sept. 1890, p. 7.

⁸⁸ Employee and wages ledgers, Hook Norton Brewery.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Banbury Guardian*, 14 Sept. 1899, p. 3.

The wages varied from quarry to quarry – enough so that in the court case of John Barnes, an employee of the Ironstone Partnership, charged with breach of the peace, he claimed he had been provoked to bad language by the jibes of two men from the Brymbo Company bragging about making higher wages than he did.⁹¹

One indication that the ironstone boom may have attracted significant numbers of newcomers to the village, as opposed to simply giving employment to the existing workers, was the building of new residential properties. In 1900 it was reported that 30 new houses had been built and 20 more under construction in response to the growing demand.⁹² In a similar vein *The Worcestershire Chronicle* noted: ‘Since 1891 the population has grown from 1,265 to 2,000[sic]⁹³, and a steady stream of farmhands are flowing into the district, much to the dismay of the already perplexed farmer.’⁹⁴

	1881		1891		1901	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Brewery	10	2.06	19	3.73	50	8.88
Railway	0	0	16	3.34	18	3.20
Ironstone	0	0	15	3.14	57	10.12
General Labourer	16	4.53	19	3.73	20	3.54

⁹¹ *Banbury Advertiser*, 26 Oct. 1899, p. 5. Mr Barnes it seems, was driven to more than bad language: *The Gloucester Echo* reported that in February 1902 he was convicted of stealing an overcoat and two handkerchiefs and sentenced to 21 days’ hard labour. James Tobin has noted that the wage range among the traditional and new industries grew larger as the demand for iron ore increased in the First World War. By 1915 the average wage for the Brymbo workers had increased to 25/6 per week, with the ordinary agricultural worker making on average 16/9, and the Hook Norton Brewery employees 19/6.

⁹² *Oxford Journal*, 1 Sept. 1900, p. 3.

⁹³ A vast overestimation by the journalist.

⁹⁴ *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 16 Sept. 1899, p. 3.

Yet for all the wealth generated by the brewery and the ironstone quarries, and the newcomers attracted into the district, Hook Norton remained for the most part agricultural in nature, with 37% of its working population on the farms in 1901. In the same year the workers in the new industries made up a little under 26% of the parish's workforce of 563 – and of those (excluding men categorised as 'General Labourers'), 75 men were locally born, comprising 13.3% of the total workforce.

It was thanks to local manufacturing and mining that Hook Norton managed not only to retain much of its population in the late 1800s, when its surrounding parishes were losing theirs, but to attract newcomers, and retain its fundamental identity. This was not to last, however, as during the first half of the twentieth century the Hook Norton ironstone industry declined, with only brief bursts of resurgence during the two world wars, and then came to a close.

The railway followed suit – in 1951 the passenger service was cut, and the line was effectively closed in 1959.⁹⁵ The Hook Norton Brewery however, after some rough patches prior to the First World War, and changes in British drinking habits, remains to this day a successful business, a vibrant local employer, a community mainstay, and the origin of a refreshing and delicious pint.

For a number of excellent articles on Hook Norton: its buildings, families, the ironstone companies, village dissenters, field names, May Day and Club Day, Sunday School outings and the Flower Show, the village schoolmaster (1866-82) and 19th century tradesmen, see C&CH vol.9, nos. 1-3 (1982-3).

See also Kate Tiller's 'Hook Norton – An Open Village' reprinted from *The English Rural Landscape* (ed. Joan Thirsk, 2000) in *C&CH* 15.2 (Spring 2001).

⁹⁵ Richard Chalmers, *The Railway at Hook Norton* (2014), <https://hook-norton.org.uk/history/economic-life/transport/railway/> [accessed 09/06/2018].

Middleton Cheney Excavations

Middleton Cheney Historical Society

Trial excavation: Field 109 (OS), adjacent to Banbury Lane (B4525), Middleton Cheney

Context

The Historic Environment Record identifies possible prehistoric enclosures, hut circles and ditches (28/0/1 - 28/0/15) as located in Fields 110 & 109 (OS) between the built village of Middleton Cheney and the ancient route of Banbury/Welsh Lane (B4525).

This designation is derived from an examination of prints from Negative NMR SF2512 Frame 5 at the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments England, taken 24 July 1984. The Northampton Archaeological Unit suggested that these field markings were ‘probably Anglo-Saxon’.

With the opportunity provided by landowner Barrie Tustian to explore an area of these field markings, a group from Middleton Cheney Historical Society (MCHS) planned a limited training excavation for September 2017.

Whilst the possible Anglo-Saxon dating would have added to knowledge of Middleton’s foundation, the prehistoric suggestion was of more interest, given the discovery of late Neolithic evidence and early Bronze Age cremations with substantial pottery finds and significant goods in the neighbouring field to the north-east during excavation in 2012 prior to its development.¹ Two more recent Middleton Cheney desk studies (Parry, 2014 and Lisboa 2014) conveniently provide monument and excavation background to the village.²

Brief

¹ M. Cuthbert, ‘Archaeological Evaluation at Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire’ (ASC, 2012).

² I.M.G. Lisboa, ‘Desk-based heritage assessment at new production centre, the Tubes and Bracket Company, Main Road, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire, 2014, NGR SP 49377 41628 (*Archaeologica* 3234/1); S. Parry, ‘Archaeological desk-based assessment of land at Bowman Close, Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire (Museum of London Archaeology Report 14/169, 2012).

The agreed brief was to undertake an exploratory excavation with members of the community in order:

- a) to locate sub-surface evidence of the air photograph features, and
- b) to introduce those interested to the skills required in excavation.

Team

The project was instigated by Bob Hunter, who administered the programme, negotiated and ensured finds records and mapping. Brian Goodey directed work, Chris Bazeley and Lucy Koster supervised trenches, Paul Gover managed the metal detecting (MD) and Tim Price and Ian West ensured GPS locations for excavations and finds. Roger Charlesworth and Paul Taylor managed initial excavation and reinstatement. In the event, the contributions by village historian Nancy Long proved essential in adding oral and documentary evidence as the work progressed.

Work undertaken

Following a successful field walk over the intended area of excavation, together with probe plans for each Trench area in August, work concentrated in four areas on designated days in September. The area was reinstated and cleared for cultivation in early October.

The four **areas of activity** were:

1. Excavation of three 6m.-long trenches from which topsoil had been mechanically removed (subsequently examined with metal MD and partly sieved). Each trench was carefully excavated to apparently undisturbed clay levels at approximately 0.6m. Finds in upper levels, evidence of cultivation disturbance, were recorded for later evaluation.
2. Systematic MD use over the area enclosed by, and surrounding, the trenches.
3. Systematic MD and field walk survey of the additional area of suggested field markings to the north-east of the excavation site.
4. Systematic fieldwalking over the area between 1 and 3, together with a 6m-wide walk around the periphery of the field.
5. Four 1m x 1m test pits at locations immediately adjacent or near to the trenches in 1 above. In order to confirm location of undisturbed layer.

Preliminary findings

1. Excavation, sections and photographs suggest that the early ditch pattern was evident at 0.36m in Trench 2 and a similar disturbed layer with fragmentary burnt material at 0.4m in Trench 3. No artefacts were found in these levels and dating requires further consideration.

Although time and facilities prevented deeper excavation at the site and we have no evidence that cultural materials may be embedded in the clay at deeper levels than those excavated, which were down to a maximum of .7m in Trench 1, .56m in Trench 2, and .68m in Trench 3. When probed in Trench 1, the clay depth appeared to extend down to at least 2 m below ground level. But with the limited information gained during this dig, we have no way of knowing if artefacts could lie deeper in the boulder clay.

The finds on the adjoining Neolithic and Early Bronze age site, undertaken by Martin Cuthbert (2012) seem to be at, or just below, the plough base and at a maximum depth of .6m.³

2. In the absence of any subsurface surveys, site and dig locations relied on air photo and map evidence. In the event it was local oral history that identified the crucial recent shift of a field path used as a base line. Subsurface survey or more accurate site location might have yielded more evidence as above. For the excavation GPS locations have been recorded throughout.

3. In all some 265 ‘finds’ have been bagged with GPS identifiers. All were from surface or agriculturally disturbed levels. These appear to fall into four main groups:

a. Two bronze-like fragments, nine worked flints and several shards of simple pottery that may indicate prehistoric use of the area.

b. Fragments of glazed earthenware and blown glass that may indicate the field’s use prior to the nineteenth century.

c. *Circa* nineteenth-century domestic ceramic fragments, buttons, rusted handmade nails and other material from the Victorian period, including a penny of 1901.

d. Twentieth-century agricultural metalwork, land drain fragments, aluminium and modern ceramics.

Review

With the kind professional assistance of Stephen Wass, a selection of some sixty items was reviewed in late November 2017.⁴ Revised findings included:

1. That the local ironstone can, in both cleft and colour, initially suggest ceramic material.

³ Cuthbert, op. cit.

⁴ S. Wass, ‘Recent Archaeological Work in the Banbury Region by Polyolbion Archaeology’ *C&CH* 20.5 (Spring, 2017), 134-8.

2. That the two metal scraps (63005/63996) initially identified, through colour and enthusiasm, as possibly 'bronze', proved to be lead after testing. Their age and use are still unknown. A wrought metal strip (41605) requires further investigation but is unlikely to be from a weapon.
3. That there were several worked flints (inc. 12011,40307,40608 & 40904) and that a small flint may be a scraper of Mesolithic origin (40506).
4. Pottery fragments marked all periods of occupation from the sixteenth century, but with exception of a rim fragment from a Roman mortarium (mortar) (41647) and another possible fragment of that period (40709), no pre-sixteenth-century pottery was evident.

From the **sixteenth century** were two salt-glazed fragments (41010, 10016) together with a black-glazed sherd (40505). From the **seventeenth century** there was red-glazed (10015) and black-glazed (40224,41644) earthenware, together with a fragment of, probably, imported flask (40211). From the **eighteenth century** (12004), black-glazed (41303) and decorated lead glazed slipware (41633). Amidst the ubiquitous blue and white the **nineteenth century** revealed Country pottery (40235), Industrial pottery (41602) and Tin-glazed ware (41316).

5. Glass fragments, though fewer, cover the same periods with the earliest probably (12001) and fragments from the late seventeenth (40913) and from a wine bottle of the eighteenth century. (40217).

Conclusions

1. It is thirty-three years since the air photo crop markings were recorded. Our trial excavation may have intersected with two of these features but at a depth which probably excludes any prehistoric designation. They may well be, as the official description suggests, of Anglo-Saxon origin although no evidence of artefacts supports this, indeed no Anglo-Saxon material was found in field walking.

Muldowney's (2012) report on test trenches north of the Cuthbert (2012) excavation and adjacent to Banbury Lane suggested long cultivate land with some section evidence but no in situ artefacts.⁵

Prior to any further excavation in the area a desk, soil and landscape study of Fields 109, 110, 111, 112, 113 and adjacent areas, with particular reference to water access and track evidence is required.

2. Identification of finds provides a glimpse of Middleton through history. Roman evidence, commonplace in fieldwalking throughout the

⁵ L. Muldowney, 'Land off Banbury Lane, Middleton Cheney: archaeological evaluation for Barwood Developments' (Cotswold Archaeology Project 660049, Report 12078, 2012).

area, may endorse a settlement at Castle Farm to the north, but otherwise there is the debris of an agricultural community since the Tudor period, sparing in what it leaves behind, but with artefacts that can be used to imagine field life in the past.

3. Any further excavation of these features must be predicated upon a geophysical survey together with air photography, by drone if possible, of one of the several sites in the field showing a combination of features.

4. A structured and managed archaeological experience was enjoyed by some thirty persons aged between 5 and 79. In good weather, it provided both the exhilaration and disappointments of exploratory work.

5. Reports should be added to the local, county and national record once artefact evaluation is completed. A presentation should be added to the MCHS programme.

6. The auspices of MCHS proved effective and it is suggested that any future work is under the MCHS banner. Membership of CLASP Northants (Community Landscape and Archaeology Survey Project) could provide access to professional services on future excavations.

7. The foundation has been laid for a local archaeology group although those responsible on this dig may require younger and more physically able members in future.

8. There are a number of fields surrounding Middleton Cheney where fieldwalking in association with MCHS might be profitable in the appropriate season. Whilst new development sites require survey by professional archaeological firms, there is always potential in domestic extensions and garden refurbishments, as well as in identified prehistoric and medieval sites.

Those interested in undertaking similar work might find the following guides useful:

S. Thomas, 'Searching for answers: a survey of metal-detector users in the UK' (*International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 18 (1) 2012), 49-6.

P. Riccoboni and J. Moore, 'An archaeological evaluation on land to the north-west of Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire NGR 449137 242498 (John Moore Heritage Services Project No: 2734, 2012).

S. Watson, 'Why can't we dig like they do on *Time Team*?' The meaning of the past within working class communities,' (*International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17(4), 2011), 364-79.

Lecture Reports

Thursday 13th September 2018

St Mary's: how architecture, theology and liturgy combined to build it

Revd Canon Jeff West

A large number of BHS members swelled by a group from St Mary's congregation gathered at St Mary's Church, Banbury, for the first meeting of autumn indoor lectures. After the customary light refreshment the audience settled down to hear Jeff West expound on his theory that the architecture of the church was due in part to the theological and liturgical influences of the day.

For the benefit of anyone who knew very little about the story of Banbury's main church building Jeff West gave a brief history of the site from a presumed seventh century Saxon Minster, by way of the mediaeval church which followed it. Little is known about the latter but its authority governed every aspect of daily life. By the eighteenth century this church had become dilapidated and old fashioned and people worshipped in a very different way. The influence of classical architecture was already evident in domestic architecture.

At this point Jeff West turned to the thinking that governed the style of the current building. It was the Age of Reason: in France, under the Revolutionary government, churches became 'temples of reason'. Locally there was a close relationship between the Unitarian Church and St Mary's congregation. These principles were carried through into the design of the new church. It was a large 90ft. square space and had galleries on all four sides. High pews meant that the congregation could not see each other but could focus on the preacher. A small chancel reflected the fact that few people took communion.

By the mid-Victorian period the Gothic style was back in fashion and plain windows were replaced by stained glass, walls painted and the chancel enlarged to house a choir and to encourage more communicants. The Bishop appointed a succession of younger vicars with high church leanings to further this trend.

The lecture was marred by the poor quality of the sound system, which prevented many people, including myself, following the subtlety of this interesting concept of how ideas influence the way a building is developed.

Brian Little

11th October 2018

Exploring the Origins of Domestic Animals Using Ancient DNA

Professor Greger Larson

This was a whistle-stop tour of some of the very latest research in this fast-expanding field where genetics meets archaeology. The ability of science to decode whole genomes from small bits of bone and tooth, many thousands of years old, and then to compare them to each other and to modern DNA, using the vastly increased power of today's computers, has meant that Professor Larson had already proved his own research from ten years ago to be wrong. Greger Larson heads Palaeo-BARN, the home of the Wellcome Trust Palaeogenomics & Bio-Archaeology Research Network at Oxford University. His main focus with us was on pigs, chickens and dogs, all of which have a very long connection with our species: where did they come from, when did they first co-habit with humans, what did we mean by domestication anyway? We glanced at phylogeography – the correlation between genetic signature and place – and learnt that all modern pigs are 30% genetically Asian, and all modern cattle contain a genetic trace of the now extinct aurochs, which our prehistoric ancestors hunted (just as modern humans contain traces of Neanderthal DNA). The relationship between dogs and humans goes back 14,000 years, and the story of American dogs has puzzled researchers: it appears that the only genetic trace of pre-colonial dogs is a sexually-transmitted contagious cancer. In this country, zoo-archaeologists had found that chicken numbers doubled everywhere in about 1000 AD, and queried why? But in this case there was a simple explanation: the Benedictine reforms at that time had increased the number of days that Christians were enjoined to fast and thus to refrain from eating four-legged animals. Chickens didn't count, nor their eggs. Altogether this was a most engaging and fascinating talk, full of far too much information to take in, but we were privileged to hear at first-hand about such very new and exciting research.

Deborah Hayter

Thursday 12 November 2018

*The Constant Terror of this Loathsome and Fatal Disease':
Facing Smallpox in eighteenth-century Banbury*

Dr Rosemary Leadbeater

Today my pick-up bus daily tells me “Ebola kills 198 in ‘worst-ever’ outbreak in Congo”, a small item, hidden beneath pop and consumer items.

With a few substitutions, this was the starting point for Rosemary Leadbeater’s talk. You begin, perhaps, to see the parallels and to realise that this was not just a distant and fatal epidemic but is being repeated in other forms in today’s world. From chance media mentions, we may be aware of the instant appearance, the rapid spread, the community impact and the tears that accompany ebola. We are also aware of the brave medical staff who risk all to combat such an epidemic.

All these elements were present in Rosemary Leadbeater’s fact-filled account of two smallpox epidemics in Banbury and surrounding Oxfordshire in the eighteenth century. Readers of *Cake and Cockhorse* 20.9 Summer 2018 will have been aware of the dense but skilful abstraction of Dr Leadbeater’s doctoral thesis at Oxford Brookes University. This was threaded through with referenced detail and should be read alongside the presentation.

In condensing her successful PhD journey Dr Leadbeater succeeded in taking the audience on a journey through the arrival and impact of smallpox in Oxfordshire, and specifically in the Banbury area, and then explored through local evidence the management issues involved.

A talk can bring alive the published text, however specific and lively it may be, and the speaker took every opportunity to cite instance and human story which brought carefully analysed documentation to the audience. She noted how servants with smallpox scarring were preferred as they would not bring the disease into a house, how some families seemed particularly fated, and how medical procedures of inoculation and vaccination had to face rumours of doubt, such as persist in other areas today.

This was a lively counterpoint to the published article. A somewhat questionable bucket appeared as supporting evidence for a pest-house, but the theme that quietly surfaced at the close was that grief, today expressed in public media, was no less but quietly internalised in nineteenth century Banbury. Smallpox was a killer, a disfigurer, and a curse to those families who, perhaps, could least afford such a setback.

Brian Goodey