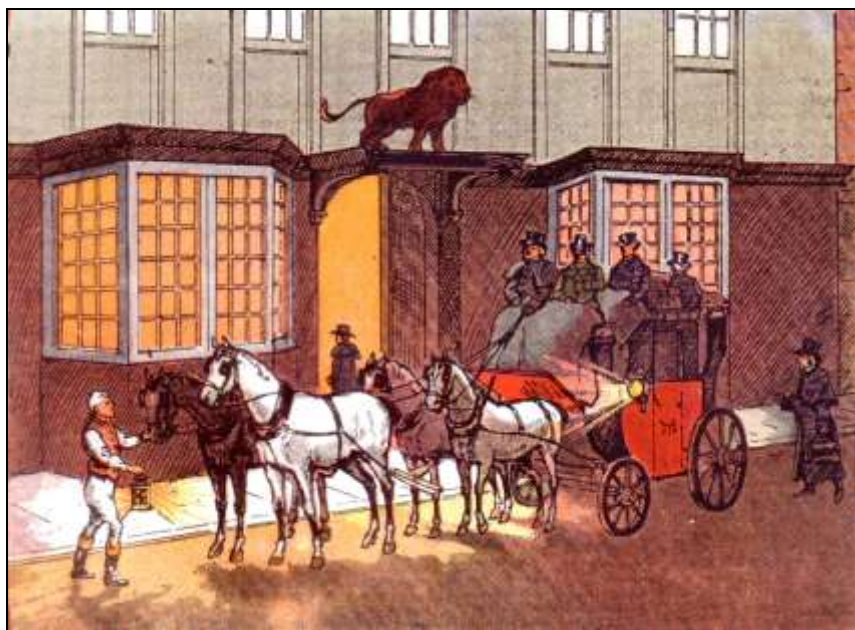


CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Charity No. 260581
www.banburyhistoricalsociety.org

President

The Lord Saye and Sele

Vice-President

Dr. Barrie Trinder

Chair

Helen Forde: helenforde1@gmail.com

Secretary

Simon Townsend
Banbury Museum
Spiceball Park Road,
Banbury OX16 2PQ
01295 236162 (*note change*)
simon.townsend@banburymuseum.org

Treasurer

Geoff Griffiths
39 Waller Drive
Banbury
OX16 9NS
01295 263944
gs@ggriffiths.plus.com

Membership Secretary

Margaret Little
c/o Banbury Museum
bemelittle@btinternet.com

Committee members

Chris Day
Helen Forde
Brian Goodey
Clare Jakeman
Rosemary Leadbetter
Barrie Trinder
Ian West
Pamela Wilson

Cake and Cockhorse Editorial Committee

Editor: Chris Day, 37 Gaveston Gardens, Hempton Road, Deddington OX15 0NX
dotandcom@gmail.com

Reviews Editor: Helen Forde helenforde1@gmail.com
Deborah Hayter, Barrie Trinder

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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We have some important news for our members: this will be the last issue of *Cake & Cockhorse* to appear in its present format. For some time we have sought a format that will enable us to produce substantial articles accompanied by large illustrations and maps that are not only more attractive but, crucially, easier to study and interpret. In the past price has discouraged such a shift but the falling cost of print production now makes it possible. Our intention is to move from three issues a year to one. Please be reassured that the amount of material we publish will not diminish, it will just appear annually in, we hope, a more attractive package. Other societies made such a move some time ago. As an example, many of our members will be familiar with the large-format *Northamptonshire Past and Present*. The first new-style issue will appear next April.

We have an important Banbury article in this issue from Society stalwart Barrie Trinder. He has edited and reproduced material originally produced in 1861 (‘The Britannia Works’). We also reprint the 1929 William Potts booklet *Coaching Days*. The pieces serve as a reminder that we are happy to publish out-of-print work if it merits reproduction, if it is otherwise difficult to access, and if it receives appropriate updating and editing. Anyone who knows of such work should in the first instance contact the Editor of *Cake & Cockhorse* with your suggestion. Our third article in this issue relates to the employment of women and children, a theme that has been addressed by a number of our lecturers in recent years.

The Banbury History Society library at the Banbury museum has been open since April. Its extensive local history collections (which include photographic collections and genealogical guides) are available to be consulted free of charge by our members. The library is open each Wednesday afternoon, from 2.00pm to 5.00pm. There will always be someone in attendance to offer guidance. We would welcome volunteers willing to spend an occasional Wednesday afternoon as supervisors.

Cover: How our [Gt-Gt-]Grandfathers arrived in Banbury for Christmas (see pages 85-86)

Obituary

Brian Little (1936-2019)

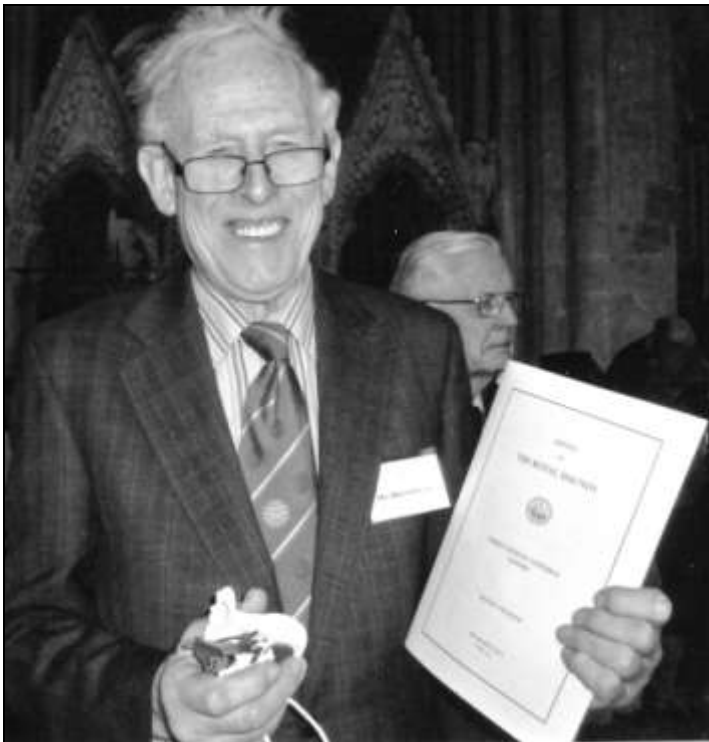
Brian Edwin Little was born on 20 April 1936 in Southampton; his childhood was interrupted by the war and he spent time in Exeter with his grandmother and subsequently in Brockenhurst in the New Forest. Returning to Southampton he attended Regents Park Secondary Modern School, where, despite having failed his 11+ exam, he was allowed to take O-level and then transfer to King Edward's School, where he met up again with pupils from his primary school with whom he formed lifelong friendships. He read geography at Southampton University, and followed that with a course on teacher training; subsequently he undertook a part-time M.Ed. from Reading University while he was teaching at North Oxford College. By that time (1962) he and Margaret, his wife, had moved to Banbury where he was to spend the remainder of his life. His choice of career at a technical college was quite deliberate; following his own initial difficulties at school he was determined that children should be offered second chances to reach their potential and throughout his long teaching career he championed those who were struggling. Many in Banbury remember him as a teacher, initially of economic geography and ultimately as the Head of Art, Design and Further Education from which he retired in 1995.

His active interest in local history came at a later stage though he was a member of the Banbury Historical Society from the moment he moved to Banbury. Teaching adults came naturally to him and when he was asked by Ted Brinkworth to fill in for some of his local history lectures, he moved rapidly into the role, whether it was talking at Rotary Club lunches, conducting Women's Institute or U3A groups on walks round Banbury or taking adult education classes in different aspects of Banbury history. His knowledge of the town and its buildings was encyclopaedic, and he used his talents to inspire many others to investigate and research aspects of Banbury history; a local history group he set up years ago still meets to discuss issues of interest to which he was a very regular contributor. Recommendations for his tours came from far and wide – from local tourist organisations to the town council – ensuring that the building history of the town was known and appreciated. He kept a close eye on developments in the town and any threats to historic buildings or conservation areas. The extent of his knowledge of buildings and Banbury people is demonstrated by the numerous books he wrote about the town, including *Banbury in Old Picture Postcards* (1997) *The Changing Faces of Banbury* (1998) (and its partner volume for Grimsbury the following year, 1999), *Banbury, a Photographic History* (2001), *Banbury a Century of Change* (2005) and *Banbury, a History* (2008).

His output was prodigious, given that he was also writing weekly articles for the *Banbury Guardian* on a wide variety of topics; he had been approached by the editor in 1995 for some nostalgia pieces when he was chairman of the Banbury Historical Society (1995-2004) and he continued to write both historical and reminiscence articles right up to his death (2019), for which he was very well known and celebrated by generations of Banburians.

Apart from local history Brian's interests were broad and varied; having been brought up in a family with interests in cricket he not only followed the sport all his life but he collected *Wisdens* very seriously. He was also passionate about birds and butterflies, taking part in national RSPB surveys and recording sightings. His family, Margaret, and his children and his dogs gave him the greatest pleasure, but we need to record his debt to the Banbury Historical Society in particular where he was a long-standing committee member (1991 – 2019) and a stalwart in ensuring that the historical sites in Banbury were recognised and given due consideration. Banbury needs people like Brian but there won't be many who have given so many years of service and contributed so much to the history of the town.

Helen Forde



Ninety Years On
Banbury in the Coaching Days

The late William Potts, Editor of "The Banbury Guardian"

First published in 1929.

Preface

In these days [1929] of rapid means of communication by road, rail and air, it may be interesting to have a sketch of those available to our forefathers in Banbury a hundred years [now nearly two hundred years] ago. Transport has returned to the main roads, so long deserted, but with a speed undreamt of by our [great-great-]grandfathers, whose most rapid journeys are set forth in the following pages. Many of the details were gleaned from the late Mr. Thompson, for many years Superintendent of Police for the Borough of Banbury, who came to reside here in or about 1810, and spent the remainder of his long life here.

* * * * *

To treat this subject as comprehensively as is suggested by the title we should have to deal with Banbury from the middle of the Seventeenth Century to the middle of the Nineteenth. Several private houses in our town boast of having been inns in the coaching days, and their claim to such distinction is by no means invalidated because our grandfathers and great-grandfathers knew them – as we do – only as substantial private residences. In the times of “the Merry Monarch” and good Queen Anne they probably catered for those who lumbered through Banbury in the heavy stage or family coaches. But by “coaching-days” we generally mean those which lie between the introduction of Palmer’s mail-coach service in 1784, when a practical effort was made to meet the growing need of communication between distant parts of the country, and the time when the coaches had eventually to give way to the rail-road. Therefore the Banbury we deal with here will be practically that of the early Nineteenth Century, and in looking back over the intervening [two] hundred years, we are looking on a greater contrast with what we see around us than our [great-great] grandfathers would have observed had they looked back to the spacious times of Queen Elizabeth [I].

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century Banbury was a typical country market town, comprising, we learn, 2,755 souls, which was only a thousand more than it had contained when Charles I began his troubled reign. The town itself extended barely beyond the confines of what was known until 1889 as the municipal borough. That is to say, the inhabited streets were those we now call Bridge Street, High Street, Calthorpe Street, South Bar, Horse Fair, North Bar, Parson's Street and the Market Place. The upper part of High Street was known as Sheep Street, and South Bar as St. John's or Oxford Bar Street, no houses extending above the Jolly Weavers' Inn, on the east side, excepting the old Priory house of St. John. Parson's Street was Parson's Lane, and Calthorpe Street was Calthorpe Lane. Detached houses were to be found in Broad Street, George Street (Scalding Lane and Parson's Meadow Lane), and West Bar, the lower part of which, within the bar (which stood where the Shades join it), being known as Bull Bar Street.



The gardens in front of the houses on the west side of South Bar had not been enclosed and greensward ran from the houses to the trees and was the public Green of the town, upon which the festivities were held.

The present Grimsbury and Cherwell were fields, innocent of buildings, and Neithrop was a little hamlet, of not very good repute, separated by a distinct break in the habitations, although to the peace-loving and law-abiding burgesses no doubt not sufficiently removed by that.

The town then lay practically within its gates, only one of which was, however, standing. This was the North Bar, which stood opposite the Fir Tree Inn and spanned the road between that and a narrow block of buildings which occupied the middle of the present roadway. The supports of the West Bar, at the point mentioned above, were still visible. The stone which was formerly a part of it and which was placed therein after the great fire of 1628, bearing the text, “Except the Lord keep the City, the watchman watcheth but in vain – 1631”, has recently crumbled from a house in Calthorpe Street, to which it had been moved.



The South or St. John’s Bar had stood until twenty years previously at the spot where St. John’s Road now joins Oxford Road, and the monument erected to it on its removal was standing until it in turn was taken down in 1842.

Before the great fire there had been a Cole Bar on the road which followed approximately the course of Newland and Broad Street from the Oxford Road to the Castle, and the Bridge Bar had long been a thing of the past. The old medieval bridge, however, still spanned the Cherwell valley, excepting that the making of the canal had necessitated an alteration at one spot. In Bridge Street the houses extended no nearer the bridge than about the entrance to the present Cherwell Street. The inhabited houses numbered only about 500, not counting the hamlet of Neithrop.

So much for the extent of the town. At the beginning of the century the new Church had been opened three years but stood towerless, the tower not being finished until twenty years later.



The Town Hall was the brick building which now stands in Lower Cherwell Street, but which then occupied the middle of the Market Place. The site of the present Town Hall was occupied by the parish pound. The three-gable building in the Market Place next to the Fox Inn was the borough gaol.



The old parochial system of Poor Law administration prevailed until 1834, and the Workhouse was the old stone building on the east of South Bar, one gable of which still remains bearing a tablet. The houses of the town were mainly of wattle-and-daub or old brown stone. Of the streets there is little to write that is good. The century was well advanced before there was serious effort towards paving and draining. The red loam soil of northern Oxfordshire, while it made the district a rich one from an agricultural point of view, made execrable roads. A writer in 1809 says:-
“I remember the roads of Oxfordshire forty years ago, when they were in a condition formidable to the bones of all who travelled on wheels. The two great turnpikes which crossed the county by Witney and Chipping Norton, by Henley and Wycombe, were repaired in some places with stones as large as they could be brought from the quarry; and when broken left so rough as to be calculated for dislocation rather than exercise. At that period the cross roads were impassable but with real danger. A noble change has taken place, but generally by turnpikes, which cross the county in every direction, so that when you are at one town, you have a turnpike to every other town... The parish roads are greatly improved, but are still capable of much more. The turnpikes are very good and where gravel is to be had excellent.”

In spite of this vaunted improvement, however, the art of macadamizing had not arisen, and the roads were so soft that deep ruts, some we are told nine inches deep, were made by the heavy traffic.



There is a story told of a coach on turning into, or out of, the Red Lion, capsizing owing to the roughness of the road. So far from regretting this state of their streets the inhabitants boasted of it as pointing to a flourishing trade necessitating so much traffic. They put down stepping stones over the open ditches and water courses which ran through the streets, and pursued their ways with a complacency undisturbed by the demands or machinations of a Sanitary Authority. They drew their water from wells, regardless of the contamination which the absence of a drainage system almost guaranteed, and submitted to the frequent visitations of fever, without adding to the rates or being disturbed by any feeling of public responsibility in the matter. The Cucking Pool still existed at the lower end of the Market Place.

Until 1836 the town was governed – if such a phrase may be applied to the more or less ornamental functions discharged by a close corporation to that inaugurated by Queen Mary’s charter – by a Town Council which consisted of twelve aldermen and six capital burgesses, who held office for life and who themselves had the power of filling the vacancies as death created them. The Mayor was always one of the Aldermen. Until 1832 the election of the Member of Parliament for the Borough rested with this body. They generally, in discharging this duty,

returned the nominee of the High Steward of the Borough, the Earl of Guilford, of Wroxton Abbey, who in return entertained the Corporation to dinner a certain number of times each year. It is recorded that in the early years of the century, an Earl of Guilford spent upon these entertainments a sum which averaged per annum as much as the Corporation spent on the public work of the town.

In 1825 a private Act of Parliament for the Paving, Watching and Lighting of the town was passed and its duties discharged by a body of gentlemen known as Commissioners, and for the next quarter of the century this body constituted the nearest approach to a Sanitary Authority for the town. At that time the watching was in the hands of the old watchmen. The Commissioners lighted the hitherto dark streets with oil lamps and improved the police. In 1833 the Gas Works were established and the streets were lighted by gas in the following year.

The trade of the town was largely of a retail character. The shops kept open until nine o'clock each evening, and it was not until the forties that the first agitation for an earlier closing set in. There were a few manufacturing industries, of which weaving was the most important. The factory system, however, had not arrived here, and the weavers worked mainly at looms in their own homes, and on the destruction of the old church there had been a great demand for the oak (on terms, possibly, which we will not suggest) for the purpose of making looms. We are told that there had been as many as 1,000 employed, but that at the beginning of the century there was not that number. The factories of the north were already capturing the industry, and the Yeomanry had to check a riot of the unemployed. Many of the inhabitants of the villages worked for Banbury masters. Plush and webbing were also manufactured. The fame of its cheese has departed, as it practically had at the beginning of the last century, but that of its cakes has carried into the Twentieth Century without any fear of its loss or diminution.

Agriculture was, of course, the staple industry of the district, and Banbury market was, as it had been for centuries, and we are glad to think still is, the most important of the neighbourhood. A change was coming over the system of agriculture. The open fields were disappearing under the operation of the Enclosure Acts, and enclosed farms, in spite of the prejudices and protests of old fashioned agriculturists, were growing rapidly in number. Very nearly the whole range of country from Banbury to Chipping Norton, we are informed, had been enclosed by 1809 and improved in produce very

greatly. A writer at the beginning of the century says:- “If you go into Banbury market next Thursday you may distinguish the farmers from enclosures from those with open fields; quite a different sort of men; the farmers are as much changed as their husbandry – quite new men, in point of knowledge and ideas.”

The period of the Napoleonic wars saw, it is hardly necessary to remind ourselves, a great increase in the prices of provisions. A comparison of a list of Oxfordshire prices in 1768 and 1807 shows that mutton had risen 64 per cent; beef, 50 per cent; veal, 114 per cent; bacon, 25 per cent, and butter 76 per cent in price. In 1806 the quartern loaf was elevenpence in Banbury. The cost of farming was increasing largely. A comparison of the expenses of farming in Oxfordshire in 1790 and 1803, returned to the Board of Agriculture, shows that the cost of labour had risen 37 per cent; artisans, 35 per cent; rent, 20 per cent; tithe 33 per cent; and rates, 169 per cent. It will be seen, therefore, that the period of which we treat was one of transition in the industrial life of the country, and was so felt in this locality.

One feature of the transition was the breaking down of the old condition of local isolation. In the medieval system every township, almost every manor, was self-contained and self-supporting. This was no longer possible after the breaking-up of the manorial system and by the Eighteenth Century the inter-dependence of the various parts of the country was being emphasised in a variety of ways. The public method of communication consisted of the coaches, the waggons and the canal boats.

In addition to these there was the posting system, chaises drawn generally by two horses, one of which was ridden by a post-boy, being hired by private individuals for their journeys. This was the source of a large and lucrative business and brought more custom to county hostelries than the coaches.

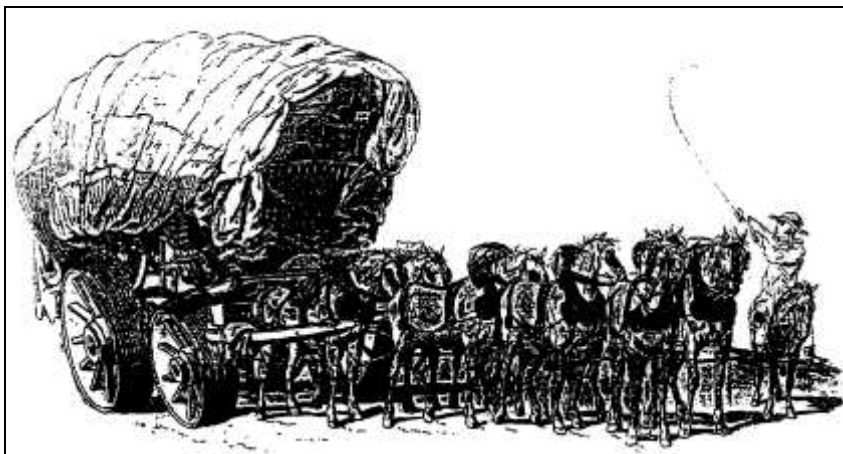
* * * * *

The Oxford and Birmingham Canal was completed in 1790 but it had opened as far as Banbury in April, 1778,¹ and on its completion it placed the town and neighbourhood in communication for the transit of goods with London, Manchester and Liverpool and the Wednesbury collieries. It was of the greatest importance to Banbury, and a writer in 1845 declared that from its opening might be traced a new impetus to the

¹ See Gibson. *Banbury and the Origins of the Coventry to Oxford Canal, 1768-78* (2015).

prosperity of Banbury, which had caused a yearly addition to its trade and necessitated the erection of entire streets. By means of the canal Banbury had maintained commercial superiority over all rivals.

The waggons conveyed merchandise by road to London and also to neighbouring towns. In 1798 Mr. Judd,² who owned the important carrying business here, and was a well-known member of the old Corporation, started a waggon for London, through Deddington and Islip, every Monday and Friday morning, and every Tuesday and Friday one to the Metropolis via Buckingham. At two o'clock each Monday and Wednesday morning a waggon left for Birmingham through Kinton and Stratford, and on Friday mornings a waggon went to Birmingham by way of Warwick. Other waggons were passing through Banbury on most days of the week, calling at various inns in the town, and connecting it with centres. There were 32 village carriers attending Banbury, most of them coming on Thursdays, but some on other days.³



Although intended mainly for goods and parcels passengers were taken in the wagons and had to make themselves as comfortable as they could on straw. The heavier waggons would sometimes load up six or seven tons and were drawn by eight horses, the waggoner riding on a pony by the side. They took two days and two nights to do the journey to London. Mr. Golby succeeded to the chief carrying trade here, some time

² Gibson, 'The Immediate Route...' Hy Stone and Wm Judd. *C&CH*. 12.1 (1991), 10-12; Renold, 'William Judd & Banbury Corporation' [c.1774-1832]. *C&CH*. 12.2 (1992), pp.41-44.

³ Trinder, 'Banbury: Metropolis of Carriers' Carts'. *C&CH*, 18.7 (2011), pp.210-243.

in the second decade of the century, and introduced a lighter van drawn by four horses which, starting here one morning, reached London the next. It does not appear to have lasted long.

In 1798 there were four coaches which connected Banbury with the outside world. The mail coach set off every day from the White Lion at half-past four o'clock and passed through Woodstock and Oxford to the Bull and Mouth Inn, London. The Post Office was at the White Lion and the post closed at four o'clock each day. In addition to the mail coach there was "The Old Banbury Coach", which set off from the Red Lion every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday at four o'clock to the Bell and Crown, Holborn, and returned thence every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at six o'clock. Every afternoon at three o'clock a coach for Oxford set out from the White Lion Hotel, returning from the Angel Inn, Oxford, at seven o'clock each morning. In addition to these the Birmingham Mercury Coach passed through Banbury six times a week, both up and down, and called at the White Lion.

As the new [nineteenth] century grew in years, however, the number of the coaches increased. The arrangements were continually fluctuating. New coaches would be added, run for a time, and then give place to others.

It is not my purpose here, indeed it would be impossible in such small compass, to note the changes and developments of the coach service. I can only sketch it as it existed at certain specific periods. Take for example the year of Waterloo [1815]. From the Red Lion a coach set out every Sunday, Wednesday and Friday mornings at five o'clock for London, via Brackley and Buckingham, and at half-past nine the same morning another left for Leamington, Warwick and Birmingham, and a quarter of an hour later still the same mornings another for Coventry, Nuneaton and Leicester. At eight o'clock every morning, except Sunday, a coach left Kidderminster and arrived at the White Lion, Banbury, at five o'clock in the afternoon, continuing via Bicester and Aylesbury to London, where it arrived the following morning at seven o'clock. It returned every evening (Sunday excepted) at seven o'clock, reaching Banbury at seven the next morning and Kidderminster at five the same evening. Every day at four o'clock a coach left the George and Dragon [Horse Fair] for Woodstock, Oxford and London.

It will be seen from the above that the lines of direct communications were few and the trouble of a journey to any place lying off them may be imagined. The traveller to the West of England, for instance, either had to post direct or make a tedious journey by coach routes, changing from

one to another until he at last he caught the one which would take him near or to his destination. The ultimate rendezvous, if it did not lie on the coach route, would have to be reached by post-chaise. In 1823 we find a coach leaving the Red Lion, Banbury, for Cambridge every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, returning from the university town on the alternate days. It gave the town what it cannot boast of to-day, direct communication with Cambridge, but it does not seem to have run for more than a couple of years, perhaps not so long.

Of the life of the road in those days we must not stop to write; neither need we try to do what has been done in such an illuminating manner by others. In the pages of Charles Dickens is enshrined for ever the social aspect of the coaching days, and every one who knows his Dickens as he should will have caught the spirit of the times from one who better than any other can conjure it before him. The coaches were not the only means of transit, they were the conveyors if not the purveyors of news. Many of the most important events of the time, and which have since become some of the most epoch-marking events of history, were first made known throughout the country by the progress of the coaches. For instance, for several evenings in April, 1832, crowds of people waited anxiously in the streets of Banbury for the arrival of the evening coaches, looking to them for news of the progress of the great Reform Bill in the House of Lords. It is difficult for us to-day to realise the intense feeling which this measure and its resistance created throughout the country. It is only by a study of contemporary letters and literature that we can glean the faintest impression of the feeling it provoked. Here in Banbury it rose very high. On the evening of Saturday intelligence arrived that the Bill had passed the second reading by a majority of nine peers. Immediately there were the greatest rejoicings, the bells being rung. Those of Adderbury had already been set ringing by the coach as it passed that village, and doubtless at many other places on its route it had provoked similar manifestations.

Now, with our telegraphic communication we should know of such an event in Banbury within a few minutes after the tellers had announced it to the House. But while we boast of our developments there are often times when we look with a sigh of regret at the leisurely spirit of those good old days which has gone, alas, for ever. In an age of steam, electricity and petrol we can wait for nothing, for nothing waits for us. It is not merely the coachmen, guards and post-boys who have disappeared. They were a distinct class who have no representatives to-day.

But the travellers to-day are as radically different from those of [two] centur[ies] ago, as the engineers, into whose hands we commit our lives, are from the top-booted coaches who conveyed our [gt-gt-]grandfathers from stage to stage, providing them meanwhile with a fund of amusement, in the shape of anecdote and commentary which we seek in vain on our journeys to-day.

The humour was not, however, found exclusively on the box and, indeed, sometimes it was turned in a practical sense against that exalted position. For instance on a certain evening in February, 1833, as one of the Leamington evening coaches was on its road homewards from Banbury it stopped at "The Dirt House", the small public-house at Little Bourton, to set down a passenger. The coachman and guard went into the house, when a passenger who had been entrusted with reins drove off, and, having changed horses at the usual place, went on to Leamington, leaving coachee and his companion to take a dirty walk of 20 miles in their greatcoats. The amateur driver arriving at Leamington took his luggage and departed without his identity being ascertained.



To be a guard of a coach, especially a mail coach, was no light work. Let us take as an example of a guard's day the London and Kidderminster coach, the times quoted being those which prevailed in 1830. The guard had to be up and see his coach loaded in time to leave Kidderminster at five a.m. Banbury was passed about one p.m. and London reached about 9.30 at night. It would not be far off midnight before the guard would have settled up and be able to rest. The coach left London at five a.m. the next morning, so he would have only an hour or two for sleep, as he would have to be down in time to superintend the loading. Banbury was passed

on the downward journey about half-past two in the afternoon and Kidderminster reached at half-past nine, so he had no more chance of rest than he had had in town. There were in addition only two long stages in which he could get any rest, between Banbury and Bicester, and Bicester and Aylesbury. The remuneration was good and amounted to about £1 a day as a rule, but the work was altogether too much for one man. William Thompson, for many years superintendent of police at Banbury, thought at one time of taking a guard's place but after a trial on the Kidderminster coach abandoned the idea. The preservation of the peace of the borough of Banbury doubtless proved, if less remunerative, not so exhausting.

The driving of the Kidderminster coach was divided. At the time Thompson made his experiment a driver named Tom Bowden brought the coach from Kidderminster to Banbury and Charles Wyatt took it on to London. This coach used to carry large quantities of needles, which were very heavy and cost £1 for the carriage of a not very large box.

In cases of breakdown or the coach being snowed-up the work of the guard was considerably increased, as he had to get the mails through. General instructions were issued to mail-guards as to what to do. A post-chaise was if possible to be procured and if there were not more than two passengers these were to be forwarded thereby with the mails. If that could not be procured then the guard was to take one of the coach horses, or two if the mail required it, and proceed at once with the mails, changing the horses at each post town, and doing all his office duty the same as if the coach travelled.

The Christmas of 1836 is memorable for the great snowstorm that accompanied it.⁴ I doubt if those of us who annually hope for "an old-fashioned Christmas" would be so keen to make our Christmas journeys on a coach. The snowstorm just referred to disarranged the coach and mail service in all parts of the country, and it remains one of the record storms of the century. Banbury enjoyed no immunity. It snowed here all Christmas Day and the next day saw a very deep and drifted snow. The Birmingham and Oxford mails got in about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, but there was no sign of the mail which had left London at half-past seven the previous night, and should have reached Banbury at a quarter-past three that morning.

⁴ '[1836] Dec 26: Very deep & drifting snow – no coaches able to reach the Town [Deddingon] – the Van 12 hours in coming from Oxford with 9 horses.' G Smedley-Stevenson, ed., *Early Victorian Squarson: Diary of WC Risley, 1835-48*, BHS 29 (2007).



The Union Coach left the Red Lion at eight o'clock in the morning as usual for London but soon afterwards returned, reporting that the journey was impossible. The Sovereign coach, which should have got here about six o'clock in the evening and proceeded to Leamington, did not arrive at all. On the next morning, the 27th, there was still no sign of a London mail, but shortly after noon the guard arrived on horseback with the mail which had left London on Christmas night, having brought the bags by horse from Aylesbury. Between seven and eight o'clock the same evening the mail which left London the previous evening came in the shape of four horse loads of bags. There came on this day no mails from Oxford or Brackley. The London mail route was through Aynho, Bicester, Aylesbury, Tring, Berkhamstead and Watford. After being deserted for nearly a century, it is [still, by M40] known as the direct motor route to London.

The mail which had passed through Banbury en route from Birmingham to London on the 26th also got no further than just beyond Aylesbury, from which place the guard had to proceed, as his downward comrade had done, by horse. He had a dreadful journey. The road-marks were frequently effaced and he and two post-boys who had joined him with bye-bags frequently cleared gates, hedges and ditches. Having a general knowledge of the lie of the county, however, Price, the guard, managed to pilot them eventually to London, but he was completely exhausted on reaching it.

On the 28th it was impossible for the coaches to start and the guard left Banbury with the Birmingham bags for London at ten o'clock in the morning, the Oxford bags being sent out on horseback at half-past four. There were symptoms of a thaw on this day, but the next morning (Thursday, 29th) there was sharp frost. The mail which had left London on Tuesday evening arrived in Banbury shortly after ten o'clock on Thursday morning in a chaise and four.

This gives us an admirable picture of the work of mail conveyance under stress of storm in the coaching-days. Of course passengers, under such circumstances as these, were simply arrested in their progress and would have to spend two or three days in the nearest refuge they could find. Let us hope that any who spent part of their Christmas holidays under compulsion in Banbury in 1836 were as well cared for as we may be sure they are to-day.

Mr. H.W. Tancred, M.P. for Banbury, was to have arrived at the White Lion Hotel on the 27th to address his constituents. Needless to say he did not arrive, but his supporters were re-assured on hearing the following day that their Member was safe in London and hoped to be able to reach them the following week. Now-a-days, when political representatives can have their afternoon tea on the terrace of the House and their dinner in Banbury, before addressing a meeting at 8 o'clock, they perhaps hardly appreciate the personal discomforts their predecessors in the Parliamentary sphere were called upon to undergo in the days when the 6.10 out of Paddington was an institution of the distant future.

Even in 1836, however, the innovation which was to render this possible had been made. The construction of rail-roads out of London was already proceeding, and before another Christmas Banbury was to feel their influence, for on October 16th, 1837, the London and Birmingham Railway (now known [1929] as the London and North-Western) was opened as far as Tring. Passengers leaving Banbury by the old Union coach at 8 a.m. for Aylesbury, could proceed from that place by omnibus to Tring Station, and could arrive in time for the 2 o'clock train and be in London by 3.30. The cost of the single journey was fourteen shillings.

As the line pushed further north so the coach routes were altered to get to the railway at the nearest point and in April, 1838, a coach called "The Railway" was started to run from the Red Lion Hotel to the station at Denbigh Hall, and in October the same year, in consequence of the opening of the line between London and Birmingham, the mail coach which had run through Banbury between these two places was

taken off the road. This was attended by a great deal of inconvenience to Banbury, which was for the time left stranded. The only means of conveyance of letters to London was to run a mail cart to Oxford which had to leave at 4.30 in the afternoon, so that instead of posting up to 10 p.m. Banbury people had to post six hours earlier. This aroused a storm of complaints and a public meeting was held at the Town Hall to protest. The difficulty was alleviated by sending the letters through Brackley by which they could be posted up to 6.30 p.m. and running a mail coach to Wolverton station each day at 7 a.m., by which letters arrived in London at 3 p.m. Still for some time Banbury was not happy about its mails, and, as a trading community, seems to have been very sensitive of the want of consideration which it felt it received, and it harboured no very friendly feelings towards the railway companies which had only affected it by upsetting what had satisfied it for a generation.

On January 10th, 1840, the penny post (a penny per half ounce) was instituted and it interesting to know that, during the seven days following, the number of letters delivered was about three times greater than it was previously.

Into the story of the coming of the railways we cannot enter here.⁵ Not the least interesting chapter of our local history of the Nineteenth Century is that which covers the making of the railways through these parts, and it is certainly not the least complicated part of the story. The great railway boom of the forties affected our district as much as the others, as will be understood when I state that no less than 78 different railways were projected through or into Oxfordshire. Henceforth the coaches became the mere accessories of the railways, until at last the survival of what, let us hope, were the fittest projects drove them off the road altogether.

⁵ See B. Trinder, *Junctions at Banbury: a town and its railway since 1850*, BHS 35 (2017).

As an example of the means of communication open to local travellers and for the conveyance of goods before the railways influenced us all, I append the coach, waggon and boat tables from Rusher's *Banbury List and Directory* for the year 1837.

Ed. note. This type of information is in Rusher's *List*, but is not included in the Index and CD to Rusher's *Directory* published by the Society (vol. 34, 2014).

From the White Lion Inn:

To London. – The Royal Mail, every night, at half past eleven o'clock, through Aynho, Bicester, Aylesbury, Tring, Berkhamstead, and Watford, to Griffin's Green Man and Still, 335, Oxford-street, and King's Arms, Holborn-bridge, London, at six o'clock every morning. Returns from London every evening at half-past seven o'clock, and arrives in Banbury at a quarter-past three o'clock every morning.

To London. – The Sovereign, every morning, at eleven o'clock, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the Mail route, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, by way of Amersham and Uxbridge, to Griffin's Green Man and Still, at half-past six, and King's Arms, Holborn-bridge, at seven o'clock. Returns every morning at nine, and arrives in Banbury at six o'clock.

To Birmingham: – The Royal Mail, every morning, at a quarter-past three o'clock, through Southam, Leamington Spa, Warwick, Knowle, and Solihull, to the Swan Hotel, Birmingham, at half-past nine o'clock. Returns at seven, and arrives in Banbury at half-past eleven at night.

To Birmingham: – The Regulator every day (Sunday excepted), at a quarter before twelve, through Southam, Leamington, Warwick, Knowle, and Solihull, to the Castle and Saracen's Head Inns, at six o'clock every evening. Returns at half-past eight, and arrives in Banbury, afternoon, at two o'clock.

To Leicester. – The Regulator, every morning (Sunday excepted), at a quarter before eleven o'clock, through Southam, Dunchurch, Rugby and Lutterworth, to the George Inn, at six o'clock. Returns at eight o'clock, and arrives at Banbury every afternoon at two o'clock.

To Northampton: – The Novelty, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at three o'clock, through Byfield and Daventry, to the Angel Inn, Northampton, at seven. Returns every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, at ten, and arrives in Banbury at half-past one o'clock.

To Oxford. – The Regulator, every afternoon (Sunday excepted), at two o'clock, through Deddington and Woodstock, to the Angel Inn, at half-past four o'clock, where it meets Coaches to London, Cheltenham and Gloucester, the same evening. Returns every morning at nine o'clock, and arrives in Banbury at a quarter-before twelve o'clock.

To Cheltenham: – The Novelty, every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday afternoon at two o'clock, through Chipping Norton and Stow, to the Royal Hotel, Cheltenham, at seven the same evening. Returns every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, at ten, and arrives in Banbury at three.

To Leamington: – The Sovereign, every evening at six o'clock, through Southam, to the Bath Hotel at half-past eight. Returns every morning at a quarter-before nine, and arrives in Banbury at eleven.

From the Red Lion Hotel:

The Union Safety Coach, to London, every morning, at eight o'clock, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, through Adderbury, Aynho, Buckingham, Winslow, Aylesbury, Amersham, Uxbridge, &c.; Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, though Middleton, Farthinghoe, Brackley, Buckingham, &c., to Griffin's Green Man and Still, Oxford-street, at half-past six o'clock. Returns Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, by way of Brackley, Farthinghoe &c. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, by way of Aynhoe [*sic*], Adderbury, &c., and arrives in Banbury at half-past six o'clock.

To London. – Sovereign Union, every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning at 11 o'clock, thro' Brackley, Buckingham, Aylesbury &c., to the Green Man and Still, Oxford Street, Bell and Crown and King's Arms Inns, Holborn, at 8 o'clock. Returns every Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, and arrives in Banbury at half-past five o'clock

To Leamington. – Sovereign Union, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at half past five o'clock in the evening, thro' Southam, to Copps' and the Bath Hotel, Leamington, at eight o'clock.

To Oxford. – The Warwickshire Tally Ho, every day (Sunday excepted) at 1 o'clock by Deddington and Kidlington, to Perrin's office, and Cross Inn, Oxford, at 4 o'clock, where it meets coaches to Southampton, Isle of Wight, Guernsey, Cheltenham, Bath, &c. Returns every morning at 8 o'clock, and arrives in Banbury at half past 10 o'clock.

To Birmingham. – The Warwickshire Tally Ho, every day (Sunday excepted) at half past 10 o'clock, by Gaydon Inn, Leamington and Warwick, to the Albion Hotel, Birmingham, at half-past 3 o'clock. Returns every morning at 8 and arrives in Banbury at half-past 1 o'clock. The above coach

meets coaches for Leicester, Coventry, &c. at Leamington, and for Leicester, Rugby, Wolverhampton, &c., at Birmingham.

Golby's Banbury and London Waggons

Load at his Warehouse, Banbury, on Wednesday noon at 1, Thursday afternoon at 3 and Saturday noon at 1, (Wednesday and Saturday, thro' Brackley, Thursday thro' Aynhoe) by way of Aylesbury, Wendover, Uxbridge, &c., and arrive at the Bell Inn, Wood-street, Cheapside, London, on Friday, Saturday and Monday mornings at 4; leave London on Saturday, Monday, and Wednesday evening at 6, and arrive in Banbury on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at 9 o'clock.

A light Waggon to London, from the Plough, Adderbury, on Wednesday and Saturday mornings at 10 o'clock, by way of Brackley, Buckingham, &c.

Golby's Banbury and London Vans. To London in 24 hours.

Leave his Warehouse, Banbury, on Monday, Tuesday and Friday mornings, at four o'clock, through Brackley, and arrive in London on Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday mornings at four; return Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday morning at 10, and arrive in Banbury on Thursday, Saturday and Monday mornings at 10 o'clock.

Golby's Birmingham Waggons.

By way of Southam, Leamington, Warwick and Solihull.

Load at his Warehouse, in Banbury, Monday and Friday mornings, and arrive at the Red Lion, Digbeth, Birmingham, on Tuesday and Saturday mornings. Load in Birmingham Wednesday and Saturday evening, and arrive at Banbury on Thursday and Monday mornings.

Parker and Co's London Waggons.

By way of Southam, Leamington, Warwick and Solihull.

Load at their Warehouse, at the Bridge Wharf, every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings, and arrive in London at No. 17, Old Change, Cheapside, every Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Monday mornings early for each day's Market; by way of Adderbury, Deddington, Woodstock, Oxford, Tetsworth, Wycomb, Beaconsfield, Uxbridge, &c. Return the same days, and arrive in Banbury every morning (Monday two waggons), Wednesday and Friday mornings.

C. RUDKIN'S Brackley, Buckingham, and London Vans, from the Waggon and Horses Inn, Tuesday and Friday mornings, at 4 o'clock, to Brackley, at 7; Buckingham at 9; Arrive at the Oxford Arms, Warwick-lane, London, the following mornings at 4, and return at 10.

George Measom's account of the Britannia Works

Barrie Trinder

The Britannia Works was one of the key institutions in both the social and economic life of Banbury in the second half of the nineteenth century. The business was established by James Gardner, ironmonger in High Street, Banbury, and patentee in 1815 of the Banbury Turnip Cutter, the idea for which may have occurred to him during a tour of North America. The turnip cutter regularly won first prize in its class at the early shows of the Royal Agricultural Society in the 1830s. Gardner set up a workshop in George (then Fish) Street to manufacture the cutter but when he died in 1846 he was employing less than 30 men. His family continued his ironmonger's shop but the manufacturing workshop together with the patent for the turnip cutter was offered for sale. Bernhard Samuelson (1820-1907), who had returned to England after managing an engineering works in Tours, leased the workshop and purchased the patent in August 1849. Within a decade the size of the workforce increased tenfold, Gardner's workshop was enlarged, and a second factory opened on what is now Swan Close Road. The range of products was increased, and the licence to manufacture the McCormick Reaper, which was displayed in the United States section of the Great Exhibition in 1851, proved particularly profitable. In 1870 the Board of Health approved the construction of a tramway linking the two parts of the works and a despatch depot for agricultural machines established alongside the railway. The works subsequently declined, and after a brief attempt to restore its fortunes in 1931, it finally closed in 1933. George Measom's account of the works in 1861 is perhaps the most detailed of several descriptions published around that time.

George Measom (1818-1901) grew up in Blackheath and trained as an engraver. His first publication of note was an illustrated religious work, *The Bible: its Elevating Influence on Man*, which appeared in 1849. His *Illustrated Guide to the Great Western Railway*, published in 1852, was the first of the railway handbooks for which he became famous. The books were regularly re-printed, and by 1867 covered the whole railway network of the British Isles. Measom devoted much of the latter part of his life to animal charities. He was knighted in 1891.

Measom's railway guides follow a standard format. He rarely says anything of significance about the railways themselves, but follows each main line, describing the towns and villages through which it passed. His historical accounts rarely include original material, but are often of interest since they reflect what Victorians believed about the history of the communities in which they lived. Perhaps the most valuable features of the guides are the sections on the commercial aspects of towns, which describe in detail the principal manufacturing concerns. Most of these descriptions are illustrated by engravings... Measom appears to have had a particular interest in engineering works, descriptions of which appear with his accounts of many market towns, including Worcester, Reading, Leiston and Beverley. Here we are reproducing the article on the Britannia Works that appeared in the 1861 edition of *The Official Illustrated Guide to the Great Western Railway*, pp.199-207.

Banbury

Banbury, on the small river Cherwell, is famous for its malt liquor, its cheese, and the cakes which are called by its name. The manufacture of horse girths and plush, formerly a principal source of employment here, has declined, but its fairs and large weekly markets attract a considerable amount of trade, owing to its position, having, within a circuit of ten miles, not less than 160 villages dependent upon it ...

Banbury is as famous for its production of agricultural implements as for its cross and its cakes. Within five minutes' walk of the railway stations, and in the direction of the town, is situated the extensive manufactory of B Samuelson, Esq., late MP for the borough, from whence the almost incredible number of 18,000 machines and implements of nearly every variety for lessening or assisting manual labour and economising farm production, annually radiate, as from a centre, by aid of rail and canal, to every quarter – we may say indeed to every town – in England, Scotland and Ireland.

Of Mr Samuelson's Gardner's Turnip Cutter alone, about 5,000 are made yearly. Its use is to slice turnips and other roots into pieces of convenient sizes as food for sheep and cattle; and that it possesses merits of an extraordinary degree is evidenced, not only by its having carried off all the first places at the Royal Agricultural Society's national competitions for the last fourteen or fifteen years (attaching to it, in consequence, the well-known name of the "Banbury Prize Cutter"), but, in a more telling manner, by the fact that no less than 85,000 have been made here; and that the yearly demand is on the increase. This machine,

which originally was intended to prepare this food for *sheep only*, may now be had, at the same price, with simple and ingenious additions to it (patented), which do not detract in any way from its well-known simplicity of construction: (1) for cutting wide thick slices for cattle; (2) finger pieces for sheep; (3) small strips for lambs with tender teeth; (4) thin, wide slices for young calves; and (5) ribands for fermentation and mixture with chaffed straw or meal, for horses, cattle or pigs.

Mr Samuelson must also be well-represented in the agricultural world by his chaff-cutters, seeing that for many years he has sent out nearly 2,000 annually.

Between the minimum and maximum prices, machines may be had at any gradient; there being eight or ten different sizes and prices for the most extensive requirements of steam, horse or hand power.

“Do you BRUISE YOUR OATS”, grind your linseed, crush your barley, split your beans or crack your oil-cake, to save the teeth or aid the digestion of your cattle? You may meet here with a variety of machines for the purpose, each, as we are assured, being “fitted” with the latest improvements.

Of tillage implements, the universally-used plough; the drag and seed harrows; the curious shirt-of-mail looking things called Cartwright’s harrows, which have spread so wonderfully over the length and breadth of both the grass and arable land; the equally singular-looking Canadian harrows, newly introduced into England, which, being circular, revolve in their progress, and so give the soil a much greater and more effective scoring than it could possibly have at the hands or rather at the teeth of the straightforward working drag harrow, which is nothing like a schoolboy’s copy book; horse-rakes, clod-crushers, under all the approved patents, such as Crosskill’s, Cambridge’s, Patterson’s and Robinson’s; field rollers junior and senior, if age may be determined by size; and, lastly, Samuelson’s rotating digger, may be seen here in large numbers.

We would remind the agriculturalist that the unusually heavy drain made on our farm-labourers for military and naval purposes, emigrations to the colonies, and the continually increasing activity of our manufactories, have made it a difficult matter to obtain sufficient labour to harvest the produce of the land, even at an expense equivalent in many cases to the year’s rent, and at the risk of losing a large portion of the over-ripe crops by a scattering; it must therefore be interesting to him to know that at this manufactory may be obtained cheap



Samuelson's Patent Meadow-Mowing Machine

mechanical substitutes for manual labour. We consider the subject of so much importance, that we give illustrations of the Meadow-mowing Machine, the Haymaking Machine, and (in our advertising pages) the Britannia Reaper. The first (mowing machine) is, of course, a substitute for the scythe; as shown in the engraving, it has been interrupted in its work and backed a little to give the artist an opportunity of showing details which would otherwise be hid in the standing grass; a couple of travelling wheels, which in their onward motion drive the same number of cog-wheels (geared in the frame-work) transmitting through them a vibratory motion to the knife or cutter; a draught-pole, pair of horses, and one driver (man or boy) to the formation of the whole. Descending to particulars, we may observe, that by an ingenious arrangement of joints, the beam in which the knife reciprocates, acquires a peculiar kind of flexibility, by which it adapts itself to undulating ground, like other harvesting machines, this mower is of trans-Atlantic origin, and had gained a reputation as a standard implement before its introduction into this country.

It cuts 4 ft 6 in wide, which at the slow pace of two-and-a-half miles an hour, gives a result of more than one and a third acres per hour, or between 13 and 14 acres a day of ten hours, and it leaves the ground more closely shaven than the most skilful scytheman could leave it. As received from America it cut the grass too high, a few inches more or less there being considered of little moment.

There are many good points in the construction of this machine which a farmer cannot fail to appreciate: we may especially name the provision for oiling working parts; the facilities for getting freely at such parts, although thoroughly protected by casing from dirt and dust; the substitution of wrought-iron for cast-iron; the ease and quickness with which it is thrown into and out of gear; and, lastly, on the field being finished, the rapidity with which the one driver, *unassisted*, can take hold of the beam, fold it over the carriage part, and drive it, with room to spare, through a five feet gateway – thus in less than ten minutes from the time he finishes work in one field he may be at work in the next.

The “Mower” is naturally succeeded by the Haymaking Machines: this, with one horse and one man (or boy) will get over the ground to the tune of some twenty acres a day; its rapid revolving motion whiling the cut grass high into the air, to give it the utmost benefit of sun and wind, and leaving it lightly and evenly spread over the surface. The action of the revolvers is then reversed for the purposes of slightly lightening the grass up for a further and final admission of wind through it. As regards the manufacture of this machine, if the farmer could see its parts submitted to the very severe tests they all have to go through before being sent out of the workshop, he would have no anxiety as to their stability in the field, every spring and portion of work which are likely to come in rude contact with opposing forces in the field being put through the same difficulties, but of many times the magnitude in the course of their construction, and again after completion of the machine. In hay machines of old construction, the flying dust, short pieces of grass, and seeds, are sworn enemies to the long life of the bearing wheels, which being imperfectly protected, have to fight their own battle; and in crushing their assailants, in retaliation, as it were, into a hard accumulating mass at the bottom of their cogs, only aggravate the evil, and hasten their own destruction; but in the implement now under review, the gearing wheels are so thoroughly cased-in, that even a seed cannot gain admission.

After a short interval, the haymaker is followed by the horse-rake, which is also manufactured here under different patent rights, and of various sizes. The benefit derived by the hay crop, in weather which is always uncertain at that time of year, from the use of the three previously described implements can scarcely be estimated, but even in saving time alone must be immense; then, when we consider that any labourer accustomed to drive a horse is all that is necessary for their management and that the farmer is relieved from

all anxiety and trouble on the score of obtaining an army of practised men skilled in their work, the only wonder is that any farmer who values peace of mind is without such valuable adjunct.

The Britannia Reaping Machine, which, with two horses and one man, cuts down one cereal crop at the rate of twelve to fourteen acres a day, depositing the bundles of corn with beautiful precision in readiness for the binders, and leaving a clear stubble track for the horses in the next bout, is well known.

We cannot pretend to notice every machine made here, but must not omit to refer briefly to Mr Samuelson's excellent little lawn mowing machine which ought to be in the possession of every one who takes a pride in the condition of his lawn, cricket ground, bowling green or garden borders. At one operation it nips off the grass to a uniform height, throws it into a box which is suspended from the machine, and rolls where it has worked. It leaves no loose grass to be swept up, or to wither in the sun to the detriment of everything neat and orderly, and it saves the necessity of a separate rolling. All this, too, is effected by just as much manual labour as is necessary for a gentleman's morning exercise. The sale of nearly a thousand a year proves that their merits are well understood.

As we cannot notice all the agricultural and horticultural machines made here, we would advise those who are interest in them, and have the opportunity, to pay a visit to the works. We venture to promise them a good reception, and the knowledge that they would derive would amply compensate them for the trouble and time so spent. An hour's visit to these works cannot fail to prove an instructive lesson to an enterprising agriculturalist; he may learn how, although there are nearly 400 busy men and boys constantly at work, the use of MACHINERY accomplishes what it is impossible for the workman alone to do in any length of time; he may watch at twenty lathes the process of iron shavings being turned off a bar, of holes being punched through thick iron plates, and of slices being cut off the same plates, with such apparent ease that he may almost imagine it would be no difficult thing to whittle the same material to pieces with his pocket-knife; he may see a young lad take a piece of timber scantling, pass it without marking through another machine, and it will come out in less time than he reads this description, shouldered and tenoned at both ends, and the length determined at the same time. Use enables this boy with the machine to do as much work as twenty skilled men could effect without it, and with much greater accuracy, every piece necessarily being exact duplicates of each other. The visitor would see a number of circular saws cleaving

their rapid way through trunks of trees; he would also see some forty blacksmiths' fires blown fiercely without the agency of bellows (the blast being conveyed in underground pipes from a fan); he would also see the hard, crude masses of metal called pit iron reduced like magic, in the cupolas, to a liquid state ready for running into moulds; and on inquiry where this immense and wonder-working power is derived, he will be shown in the centre of the manufactory, and well-situated for transmitting motion in any direction, a sixty horse steam engine – a power which he discovers to be as much the friend of the agriculturalist as of the manufacturer.

We will conclude our notice by stating that the works occupy about four acres of land in two nearly equal plots, situated about 300 yards from each other, but connected by means of telegraphic communication.

On one is arranged the smiths, fitting, turning and wood-working shops, some of them of large size, 200 ft by 40 ft. On the other plot is built the iron foundry, a building about 200 ft long by 80 ft wide, under one roof; the rest of the land being covered with some thousands of felled trees, principally elm and ash, seasoning ready for use.

The moral care and comfort of the workmen are by no means neglected. A library, evening school for adults, and day school for their children are provided, and a mutual assistance fund, for relief in case of sickness or accident, is established. A recreation field is also rented for the men, and suitable regulations made as regards their attendance that they may have two weekly half-holidays in summer, to enjoy themselves in it. A brass band, a fife band, cricket matches, football, quoits and other sports and pastimes make quite a gala for them on those occasions.

Mr Samuelson, the enterprising proprietor, is also owner of large smelting works at Middlesbrough, and, connected with the Banbury firm, he has depots at London (76 Cannon Street West), Bristol, York, Newcastle and other large towns.

Note. Further details of the Britannia Works can be found in B Trinder, *Victorian Banbury* (BHS 19, 1982, 2005), 34, 82-86; B Trinder, ed, *Victorian Banburyshire: Three Memoirs* (BHS 33, 2013), 231-32; 'An Early Description of the Britannia Works', *C&CH*, vol 4, 60-61; B Trinder, 'Fifty years on – Banbury in 1931', *C&CH* vol 18 (1981), 124-25; W Potts, *Banbury through one hundred years* (Banbury Guardian, 1942), 37-39. The route of the tramway can be followed on the Alan Godfrey reproduction (published 2010) of the first edition Ordnance Survey 1:2,500 map of Banbury, surveyed in 1881 and published in 1885. We are grateful to the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, whose library holds a collection of Measom guides, for the illustrations of products of the Britannia Works.

Report of the Commission on the Employment of Children and Women in Agriculture: Deddington in 1867

Chris Day

This Report¹ forms part of the vast series of parliamentary enquiries that were among the greatest achievements of nineteenth-century government. The published minutes of evidence taken by the committees are known as ‘Blue Books’. Before anyone gets too excited, I should add that the name derives from the colour of their covers! We are all familiar from schooldays with the enquiries that led to the Factory Acts and to the provision of universal compulsory education. Less well known are the investigations into conditions in agriculture.²

In 1843 a commission enquired into the employment of women and children in agriculture. The evidence compiled is a valuable historical source, telling us much about living and working conditions at that time. Banburyshire was not included, but conditions in other areas have some relevance. The enquiry took the form of a series of questions and answers put mainly to professional men and employers. That was one weakness of the 1843 commission, of course, and it was a highly significant one. Farm workers were talked about, they were not much consulted. The underlying concerns of the authorities are revealed by the amount of discussion of morality, occasioned especially by the unsupervised mixing of men, women and children at harvest time: ‘I have had opportunities, in my professional practice, of knowing that immoralities take place at harvest time from the opportunities offered by the way in which men and women are employed together’, said Mr Edward Spooner, a Blandford (Dorset) surgeon. There was also concern at the amount of alcohol taken by women and girls: ‘Have they any advantages besides the wages you mention?’ ‘In haymaking they have at least three pints of liquor, either ale or cider.’ The authorities were worried especially by the dangers of the gang system, in which gangs of male and female labourers, including children, moved around

¹ *House of Commons Papers* (1868-9), vol. 13, p. 341.

² For a general account see P. Horn, *The Real Lark Rise to Candleford: Life in the Victorian Countryside* (Amberley Publishing, 2012).

the countryside carrying out contract work. Gangs were predominantly an East Anglian phenomenon but were also found elsewhere. They were sometimes brutally controlled, and child abuse was not unknown.³ An interesting, little-known variant was the practice of young Morris Dancers from Stonesfield who sought work elsewhere in a long progress down into Middlesex, haymaking as they went, before dancing back through Berkshire and Wiltshire, and even into Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, to help with late harvesting.⁴

In 1867 Parliament revisited the issue, and this time the area covered by this article was reported on. Or, at least, Deddington, Hempton, and East Adderbury were. Not, unfortunately, Clifton, the Barfords, or Bloxham. The evidence was compiled by Assistant Commissioner George Culley. What follows below is verbatim from the Report. The article concludes with a short commentary.

Report, p 341. **Deddington**. Population 2,024. Acreage 3,990. Cultivation chiefly arable.

Revd J. Turner says, 'The cottages are owned by landlords and only a few by tradesmen. The garden accommodation is very meagre, but there are allotments which the cottagers rent. Rents of cottages vary from 1s.6d to 2s.6d a week.'

The following is from Assistant Commissioner Culley's notes on the parish:

'Deddington with its hamlets is an open parish into which labourers have been driven from surrounding close parishes; there are about 240 cottages belonging to about 50 owners, the three largest estates, approaching 300a. each, not being represented by any cottages; several of the cottages in Deddington proper are very bad; in Grove Lane, commonly called Hell Lane, are seven or eight houses with no back door, a sink in front of the cottages, and one water closet for the lot; the whole place has a horrid stench. Rent of these cottages 1s.2d. a week; they belong to small tenement holders. The inspector of nuisances certainly does not do his duty.'

³ For an account of the gang system see J. Patrick, 'Agricultural Gangs', *History Today*, vol. 36 (3), March 1986. Available online at: <http://www.historytoday.com/john-patrick/agricultural-gangs>.

For a fuller account that emphasises the need for caution in using official reports, see N. Verdon, *Rural Women Workers in Nineteenth-century England* (The Boydell Press, 2002).

⁴ *VCH Oxfordshire* vol. 11, p. 188.

Evidence of William Wheeler, farm labourer:

‘Himself, his wife, and three sons, eldest 16, in one very small bedroom. For this cottage, with two rooms and no back door, Wheeler pays 1s.3d. a week. The next cottage to this is equally bad, and is inhabited by a man, his wife, and three children. One water closet serves both cottages. Wheeler’s eldest son, 16, can read a little.’

Evidence of the inspector of police:

‘In the parishes of Deddington, Dunstew [sic], North Aston, and adjoining parishes, women are employed on farms at 8d. a day for eight hours work, between 8 am and 5 pm, with an hour for dinner. Boys are chiefly employed to drive ploughs. They begin to go to work at 7 years of age. Their hours of work begin at 6 am. Boys under nine are paid 1s. a week; at nine they are generally raised to 2s. a week. Cottage accommodation in some parishes is very limited.’

p. 350. **Adderbury East.** Population 895. Acreage 1,900.

Mr William Chamberlain, occupier and guardian says, ‘The cottages are not very good. Some have small gardens, others none at all. There are about 25a. allotments let at about £5 an acre. Many of the labourers obtain land for growing potatoes on the farms they work upon, some at no rent, others at a nominal rent. There is an endowed school for boys and adults, at which the curate assists; a girls’ and infants’ schools supported by voluntary attendance of children.’

The following evidence was given to the Assistant Commissioner by Mr Chamberlain:

‘I have a carter, 24 years of age, and an under-carter, 18, hired by the year. They live in the house of my farm bailiff, and I pay him 8s. a week for their board, and they receive respectively £10 and £6 wages at Michaelmas. Doubtless they are bound to fulfil their contract except in case of sickness, when most farmers would remove them to their own [*i.e.* the labourers’] homes. I believe we are not compelled to support them during sickness. A man and his wife and four children would cost in the house [*i.e.* workhouse] an average of 3s.4d. [each] per week; for the family £1. Out of the house this man would be earning, say, 12s. I pay my men 11s. a week, but 10s. is the average wage of the district. Women just now work from 8 till 4, and are paid 7d. for seven hours’ work. My shepherd, with his wife, who works out, earns an average of 19s. a week. He has 12s. a week, 3d. a lamb, and 3s. a score for shearing. I let six cottages with one farm, three of them attached to the farm. A farm of 500 or 600a. ought to have five or six cottages attached to it.’

p. 351. **Hempton** (a chapelry). Population 229.

The following evidence is extracted from a circular returned by the Revd P. R. Egerton:

‘The hours of work here for men are from 7 am to 5 pm, with one hour’s rest; for women from 8 am to 5 pm, with an hour’s rest.

‘Hempton is a very poor uncared-for place just a mile distant from Deddington, with no gentefolk at all living in it, a few farmers not very well to do, and a miserable set of cottagers who cannot live with anything like comfort on their earnings, and in time of sickness with little or no help except what I myself am able to give them.

I consider that the cottage accommodation is very unsatisfactory, looking at it as a whole. Many of the cottages are in miserable repair, in-deed some months ago one or two seemed likely to fall, but I believe some repairs have been done since. It would certainly seem difficult for a family to grow up really respectable in most of them, but perhaps if there were some who cared for the poor living among them and looking after them, things might be better in spite of this. I myself live here at Bloxham, three miles off, and can hardly ever get over to them except on a Sunday, so what I can do for them is but little. The people are badly off and are very thankful for the little that the children can earn, but as a rule I think they keep them at school as well as can be expected, and there are hardly any who are not either at school or work. My own opinion about field work for girls or women is that it is bad and demoralizing, and that girls had better be out at service and the women at home, but I don’t know what to say about *legislation* on the subject.’

It is clear from the above that in 1867 labourers *were* interviewed, and some of the reports are clearly verbatim, which means that we have the rare privilege of hearing such people speaking with their own voices. That is not the case with William Wheeler, above, whose evidence seems to be paraphrased. But in other places the words seem authentic, and can be moving. Thus, Mrs Huckens of Combe:

‘My husband is a farm labourer. He has 10s. a week if they make all time; sometimes he loses a day or two from wet and they take it off. I have two children, one 6 the other 3. I can’t say what my husband gets in piece-work; in harvest, if I help him with a little boy, we can cut and tie an acre a day, and we got 9s. an acre last harvest. The crop was light, the rabbits had eat so much, you see, sir, or we would have got 10s. We pay 1s.4d. a week rent. We have no allotment ground; if we could get an allotment it would help a great deal. I never was at school. I went to field work about twelve. My husband tries to teach me to read. My children should be sent to school to twelve; I wish I had been. I have been hard at work gloving, I haven’t earned 5d. They begin learning to glove at eight.’

Mrs Huckens' comments make clear how important allotments were to the cottage economy. But it is worth bearing in mind the commitment in time and effort: after a long day in the fields a man might have to walk some miles to get home, eat, and then walk out to his allotment, where he would spend two or three more hours. Housing for many people was appalling by modern standards. Hemptonians guffawing at the insulting description of Grove, alias Hell, Lane in Deddington will have been pulled up short by the blunt account of Hempton's 'miserable set of cottagers'. Few of us have a rosy, soft-focus view of the past any more, but material such as this has the power to bring us face to face with the harsh reality of life for many of our ancestors.

One cause of our parish's problems was the way in which landowners in neighbouring 'close' parishes (*i.e.* where one or two people owned all the land and controlled the numbers living there) used the more 'open' Deddington as a sink, employing its surplus labour at peak times and turning it off when not required. The owners of Deddington's cottages were not, by and large, wealthy landowners who might be prevailed upon to carry out repairs and install rudimentary services. Many cottage owners were little better off than their tenants. Typically, they might live in one cottage while renting out one or two others, and they shared the poor living conditions of their tenants.

The Report gives us evidence of wages at that time. Mr Chamberlain's rather defensive comments are particularly interesting. As to morality, that was still a concern, to the governing classes at least, as the evidence of Revd P.R. Egerton makes clear. But there were some notably tolerant attitudes, as evidenced by the letter sent to Mr Culley by C. Mostyn Owen, Chief Constable of Oxfordshire: 'My dear Sir, In reply to yours, there are many statute or hiring fairs in this county, and I cannot see any objection to them. Farm servants must have their recreations as well as their betters, and those who attend such fairs are generally well conducted and as sober as persons of the country working class are when they can get beer. Girls will get sweethearts and occasionally have bastard children in spite of all Acts of Parliament.'

Ed. note: The Revd P.R. Egerton 'lived at Bloxham'. He was in fact founder and Headmaster of All Saints' School, Bloxham, and it is quite surprising to find he was also still a curate at Deddington.

Book Review

The Battle of Edgcote 1469: Re-evaluating the Evidence, Graham Evans, Northamptonshire Battlefields Society, 2019, 142 pp, illustrated. ISBN 9781794611087.

To set the scene, this terse summary, from a 1904 Dictionary of English History, tells the basic story: *'The Battle of Edgcote (July 26, 1469) was fought between the insurgents led by 'Robin of Redesdale' and the troops of Edward IV, under the Earl of Pembroke. The former were completely victorious. Pembroke was defeated with great slaughter, and he and his brother, Sir William Herbert, were taken prisoners, and put to death by the rebels. Edgcote is in Northamptonshire, a few miles from Banbury.'*

Graham Evans has taken this event from five hundred and fifty years ago, using it to treat us to a master-class in historical research. He mentions that historians over the ages have written off the battle, mostly because there was a perceived lack of primary documentary evidence. He refutes this perception in spades, not only listing in detail a myriad of contemporary documents but also giving us lengthy extracts from them. His bibliography is helpfully broken down to Modern Studies, Journal Articles, Antiquarian Works and even a Welsh Internet connection. Interestingly Evans's research was so meticulous that he discovered that some of the authors of the listed primary documents had poached from other primary documents.

What Evans discovered during his researches, using all the primary documents listed, reflect that seemingly it is almost impossible to construct a definitive narrative of the Battle of Edgcote or Danes Moor, as one author called it, although the site of the battlefield is so named on maps. Also, there is no firm agreement as to the date of this battle in July 1469. It is also uncertain what were the strengths of the armies or the make-up of either of the protagonists. He also questions why these two armies were in the Banbury area in the first place, and whither they were going. Moreover, who was the mysterious rebel leader Robin of Redesdale?

There is a splendid claim in one account that Redesdale was leading an army of 60,000 rebels 'slinking' past the King at Nottingham – the mind boggles at the thought of 60,000 men slinking anywhere, let alone

past a Royal army. This was a battle fought on what was very much the fringe of the Wars of the Roses: that war lasted thirty years, so where would this very minor battle have fitted in the general scheme of things? It surely would have had no effect on events further north or east in the country where this war was being prosecuted.

It would seem to have been yet another of history's pointless battles, rather as the Battle of Cropredy Bridge was on 28/29 June 1644 when two armies happened to meet north of Banbury and decide that they wanted a 'boy's day-out', so they set to and had a punch-up – nothing tangible gained but a lot of men were killed, rather as at Edgcote.

Graham Evans's approach to this event makes for a thoroughly interesting book. It really does underline that in historical research it is wise not to take anything at face value until you have done a little more digging. Incidentally if you wanted to read a locally written, detailed account of that battle, delve into Alfred Beesley's *History of Banbury* (pages 178-186) if you have copy; *or* if not, consult one of the copies in our new Library at the Museum. He too used some of the primary documents that Evans cited, and called it Danesmoor.

Nick Allen

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 thirty-six 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, still available from 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).

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).

Banbury's People in the 18th Century: Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor, 1708-1797 and other records, Jeremy Gibson (vol. 36).

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

In preparation: A Selection of Articles by Brian Little first published in the *Banbury Guardian*.

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, 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.



2019 – 2020 Programme

Meetings are at Banbury Museum at 7.30 pm. Entrance from Spiceball Park Road

Thursday 12th September 2019

Rewriting History: the importance of disease in world history

Dr Eric Sidebottom

Thursday 10th October

The Battle of Edgcote 1469 – re-evaluating the evidence

Graham Evans

Thursday 14th November

People, Time, Place: the archaeology of the historic environment around HS2

Dr Helen J. Wass (This may be held in the Marlborough Road Methodist church)

Thursday 12th December

Lost Prophets: the Unfinished Dream of the Nineteenth Century

Professor Ewan Fernie

Thursday 9th January 2020

Peter the Great: architect of a superpower

Chris Danziger

Thursday 13th February 2020

‘I shall expect you sister’: the lives and letters of frontier households in the Imperial Roman Army

Claire Millington

Thursday 12th March 2020

Re-registration of Common Land – a background history and insight into the work of re-registration

Dr Frances Kerner

Thursday 23rd April 2020

Historical Artefacts Quiz

Summer outings for May and June and AGM in July to be confirmed.