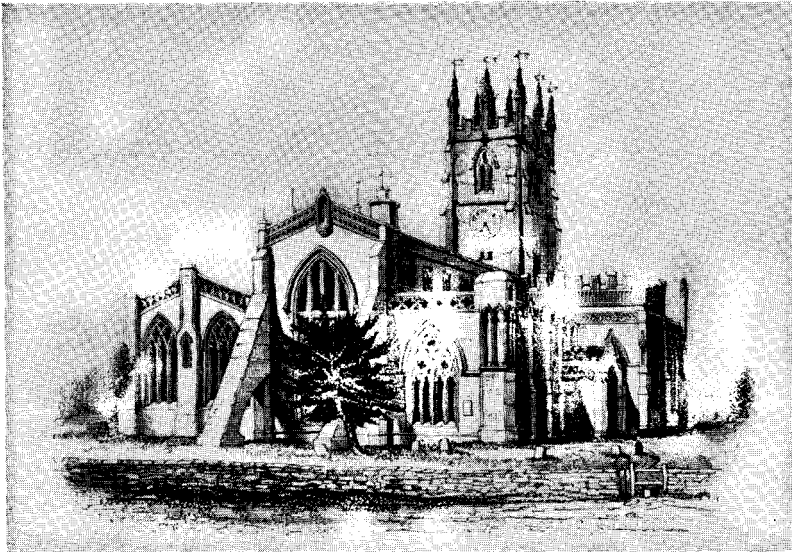


# CAKE & COCKHORSE

The Magazine of the Banbury Historical Society



Vol. I, No. 3

January 1960

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BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(21)

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CAKE AND COCKHORSE

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The Magazine of the Banbury Historical Society  
Issued to Members four times a year.

VOLUME I                      NUMBER 3.                      JANUARY 1960.

Hon. Editor : Dr. C.F.C. Beeson,  
Westway Cottage, Adderbury, Banbury. (Tel. Adderbury 272.)

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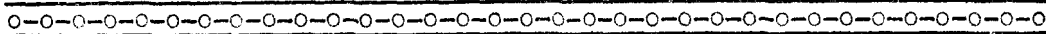
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PROGRAMME, 1960 SPRING.

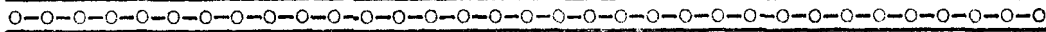
Tuesday, 26th January, 1960. - Mr. F. Anker - "The History of the Banbury Fire Service." - In the Court Room, 7.30pm.

Tuesday, 29th March, 1960. - Annual General Meeting.  
In the Court Room, 7.30pm. There will be shown a National Trust film, 'Beauty in Trust,' in colour with a sound track by John Betjeman, a colour film by the Banbury Camera Club, and colour transparencies by various members.

The Summer Programme will be announced in our next issue.



The Hon. Treasurer's Report and the Annual Accounts will appear in our March number.



LECTURE

SCIENTIFIC TECHNIQUE IN ARCHAEOLOGY

A fascinating story of how Oxford University Archaeological Research Laboratory tackles the problems facing the archaeologist by the application of scientific techniques, was told by Dr. M.J. Aitken at the Society's meeting at Banbury Town Hall, on November 24th.

In his address, which was illustrated with lantern slides, Dr. Aitken covered a great deal of ground : from the development of the proton magnetometer and its use at Swalcliffe, to spectrographic and X-ray analysis, the non-destructive testing of the glazes of ancient oriental porcelain and the testing of ancient Greek coinage by irradiation in the atomic pile at Harwell.

The great deal of interest that was aroused by Dr. Aitken's talk, was evidenced by the many questions which he was called upon to answer.

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## R E S E A R C H

### PARISH REGISTERS

BANBURY, ST. MARY. Burials, 1673-1724 (completion of Vol. 2), by Mr. J.S.W. Gibson.

MARSTON ST. LAWRENCE. Baptisms, 1813-1840. Marriages, 1813-1837 (A partial copy of one of the earlier registers).

Baptisms, 1671-1707, Marriages, 1700-1707. Burials, 1664-1672 (retranscribed), by Mrs. J.C.B. Coffin. All other registers are badly damaged by fire and almost illegible. They have recently been deposited at the Northamptonshire Record Office.

QUAKERS MONTHLY MEETING OF BANBURY. Births, 1663-1837.

Burials, 1663-1837, in progress, by Mr. J.S.W. Gibson.

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## R E V I E W

INDEX TO WILLS PROVED IN THE PECULIAR COURT OF BANBURY, 1542-1858, edited by J.S.W. Gibson, published by the Banbury Historical Society, Volume 1, 1959, price to members 12/6d, non-members 21/-. Reviewed by Professor C.R. Cheney, Professor of Medieval History at the University of Cambridge.

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At the Reformation the Anglican Church retained many of the rights and most of the structure of the medieval church. So the probate of wills remained a matter for ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and the control over their executors and administrators in intestacy was shared, until the nineteenth century, by Church courts in

bewildering profusion. The medieval prebendal church of Banbury in the diocese of Lincoln, although in 1542 it ceased to be prebendal and came within the new diocese of Oxford, remained the centre of a Peculiar: an area exempt from the local archdeacon and bishop, controlled by the dean and chapter of Lincoln. The historian of Banbury, then, who wants to use wills and inventories, goes in the first place to the records of the Peculiar of Banbury. They have recently been deposited in the Bodleian Library. Wills (and the inventories which until the eighteenth century often accompany them) provide a most promising field of enquiry; for they may yield precise genealogical facts, the economic standing of an individual and his social contacts are indicated by his bequests, departed customs and lost household goods of our ancestors come again to light. It is fitting that the first book published by the Banbury Historical Society should be an index to so important a body of historical records. The society's Honorary Secretary is to be congratulated on producing not only careful indexes of over three thousand local testators' names and occupations, but also a succinct guide to testamentary procedure (borrowed with acknowledgment from B.G. Bouwens) and a useful statement of the limitations of the Peculiar records and the supplementary material to be found in the records of archdeaconry and consistory and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. A map shows the boundaries of the peculiar and reminds us that these wills and administrations cover much more than the area of the parish or borough, extending to Cropredy, with Claydon, Wardington and Mollington, to Kings Sutton, with parts of Astrop, Charlton and Furston, and to Horley and Hornton. The editor has also for full measure given us the wills proved in the manorial court of Sibford Gower - (1732-1829). In using such a collection as this the enquirer should always remember, first, that persons with property in other places had their wills proved in the Prerogative Court or elsewhere, and secondly, that until the eighteenth century many wills escaped probate altogether.

JOSEPH PARKER,  
SABBATARIANISM & THE PARSON'S STREET INFIDELS.

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(by B.S. Trinder.)

"If we thoroughly knew the history of the Sunday excursionists," said Joseph Parker in a sermon at the Independent Chapel in Church Lane in the winter of 1855-6, "we should find amongst them the dirtiest, silliest, laziest and poorest of the toiling population." This was the beginning of a fierce and long drawn-out controversy which reveals several points of significance about religious life in Banbury in the mid-19th century. The sermon was printed and distributed as a tract, and very soon a poster issued by the Unitarian William Potts poured ridicule on Parker by announcing "If we thoroughly knew the history of dissenting preachers we should find amongst them the dirtiest, silliest, laziest and poorest of the toiling population."

In 1849 the question of whether Post Office employees should work on Sundays had aroused much feeling in Banbury, and early in 1856 a petition against the Sunday opening of the Crystal Palace and the British Museum was attracting many signatures in the town. The Wesleyan minister, J.A. MacDonald, supported the petition in a lecture on the theological bearings of the Sabbath question, but it was Parker's sermon, and in particular his remarks about Sunday excursionists which gave the controversy its momentum and bitterness. On the 18th March a song, "Joseph and his Brethren" appeared, beginning with the verse:-

"Dirty, silly, lazy, poor  
Working population  
Gang to Parker's dismal door  
And not to railway station."

A similar piece of doggerel drew attention to Parker's reprimand to his congregation on the 9th March about their coughing and sneezing during his sermon, and a "Canzonet" addressed him thus:-

"Hail thumper of the Sabbatarian gong,  
 Bell wether of sour Calvin's maudlin throng  
 Of Banbury's saints, continue still to mock  
 The sons of toil, foul liar, with thy tongue.  
 Still strike thy gong thou fulsome moral quack."

On the 18th March, 1856 the dispute reached the London press when the "Sun" regretted the description of Sunday excursionists by "some singularly impudent divine" at Banbury, and expressed regret at the damage done to the cause of religion by Sabbatarianism. William Potts published at this time a poster quoting from a sermon "Modes of Sabbath Observance left to the decision of the individual conscience" by a Unitarian minister from Newbury, which advised the Sabbatarians, "If you want the working classes to hate your priests and your kind of worship, then keep on with your Sabbatarianism. Remember theirs is a life of toil and if they breath the fresh air on Sunday, God does not call it sin." On the 22nd March, Parker replied, denying that Sabbath keeping was necessarily gloomy, suggesting that Sunday excursionists were accustomed to spend as much time in the public house as in the fresh air, and questioning whether Sabbatarians were really so unpopular among the working classes as so many of the latter attended their chapels. He declared that he found it pleasant that the Sabbath question should excite so much interest and that he had no fear of honourable controversy.

William Bunton, a virulent enemy of organised religion in Banbury, published a pamphlet of some length rejecting Parker's view of the Sabbath, decrying also the glorification of the priesthood, the undue respect for money in churches and the shortcomings of Christians. He scorned Parker's appeal to Apostolic precedent, challenging him to give up his salary, and proclaiming: "If we do things as the Apostles did, we should take to the tunic and the belt and wooden sandals .....

Apostolic precedent would place us in petticoats and make us far more like old women than we are." He said that, unlike Parker, he did not favour a total suspension of business on Sundays, but "a total suspension of Mr. Parker's business would be a great gain to the Public....Parker out-Herods Herod in making religion offensive."



Opposition to Parker seems to have been growing up on an organised basis, for the "Banbury Anti-Humbug Society" issued a poster attacking Sir Joshua Walmsley's petition to the Queen that British ambassadors abroad should try to bring about proper Sabbath observance in the countries where they were posted. Another announcement by Bunton proclaimed the imminent formation of a branch of the National Sunday League, which, "in spite of all the paid ministers and calumniating priests" would bring about "a free Sunday for a free people."

Parker soon published another tract entitled "A breath of Fresh Air," or "A word to Sunday Excursionists," showing that Sunday excursions caused work for railwaymen, and saying that as a friend of the working classes, he wished them to prize their day of rest. Most offensive however was his description of the women who travelled on Sunday excursions: "with very few exceptions they are accustomed to licentiousness, robbery and drunkenness. Do they not know that Sunday excursionists are likely to serve their demoralising designs. Of course they do!"

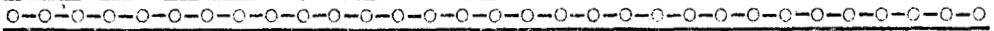
Such remarks caused much resentment, and as an expression of protest a mock trial was held at the Wheatsheaf Inn on the 18th and 19th April, at which the "dirtiest, silliest, laziest and poorest" in Banbury were given an opportunity of "testing the sincerity of Old Joe's motives." Appropriately named witnesses were to be called including Miss Sarsanct Satinstitch, the Rev. Mr. Dismal Horror and Godfrey Gotherpace. On the 19th, G. Walford printed a list of 22 persons who had been present, and on the 21st he announced that the full company consisted of between 55 and 60 persons, including "the Parson's Street Infidels", and that if such a company should meet again for a similar purpose, all the names would be published. This caused an outcry and he was accused of being the catspaw of Inquisitors and an agent of the Star Chamber. One of the 22 protested that he had gone to the Wheatsheaf only out of curiosity and that he had found the proceedings "rather more farcical and almost as ridiculous as Rev. Joseph's own twaddle." A satirical account was published of the proceedings at the Borough Police Court when a prisoner called Joseph Parker was tried and found guilty of "cadging and importuning several respectable old ladies for relief, and with using violent and abusive language." He was described as "one of the most incorrigible, troublesome and impudent beggars with which Society is acquainted" and as a member of "the class of cadgers known as the religious dodge men."

The bitterness of the Sabbatarian controversy had not abated when a further dispute sprang up over the visit to Banbury of a certain Signor Gavazzi, during which serious aspersions were cast on Parker's integrity. Alessandro Gavazzi was an Italian, a one time monk and Professor of Rhetoric at Naples. After being exiled for his nationalist opinions, he joined and became head of the Italian Protestant Church in London, and in 1860 was chaplain with Garibaldi's Thousand. While in England he made lecture tours in which he attacked the practices of the Roman Catholic Church. It seems that Parker invited him to speak at Banbury on the 6th May 1856, and again on the following day in aid of the Independent School. When Gavazzi had concluded his first session of invective, the mayor announced the lecture on the following evening on behalf of the Independent School, and a poster printed by G. Walford gave its title as "Nuns and Nunneries" and also said that it would be in aid of the Independent School. Another poster however, printed by Potts, said that the lecture would, at Gavazzi's request, be on behalf of the British and National Schools. Henry Walford, one of the leaders of the Independent congregation alleged that William Potts and J.B. Austen, both prominent Unitarians, had approached Gavazzi after the Mayor's announcement at the first meeting with handbills of the Sabbatarian controversy, and told him that a lecture for the Independent school would create opposition and unpleasantness. Potts protested that he only approached Gavazzi's secretary and that he did not take any handbills, and Austen asserted that if he and Potts had not intervened, Gavazzi would have lectured for the Independent School under the impression that "Independent" meant non-sectarian, and quoting Parker's description of the Sunday excursionists, called its author "as foul a libeller as ever did penance in a pillory." A certain 'Q' jibed that Parker ought not to complain about not having a proper school building because a lady had offered to pay for one, but the offer had been refused because Parker did not want a new school unless he could have a new "shop."

The visit of Gavazzi drew protests from Catholics in Banbury and one James Stone asked whether it was honourable for Parker "to bring a furious fanatic to the town to vilify his catholic fellow townsmen." "A Voice from Parson's Street," very possibly J.B. Austen, replied, questioning the honour and courtesy of the group of catholics who hooted and whistled at Gavazzi during his lecture and in the streets. He called Stone an ass in lion's skin, and challenged the catholics, if they felt aggrieved, to bring forward Cardinal Wiseman, to refute what had been said. Stone replied with a pamphlet extolling the virtues of England's catholic kings, gratuitously explaining to the Duke of Newcastle, a vigorous opponent of Catholic emancipation, that there had been no rotten boroughs when Edward I created representation of the people, and claiming that the visit of Gavazzi to Banbury was a calculated insult to the sacred institutions of France, England's gallant ally in the Crimean War. Another catholic poster accused "Jesuitism Joe and Co." of wishing to re-enact penal laws against the "pastors of a religion of millions (sic) of Her Majesty's loyalist subjects."

Parker himself does not seem to have heeded this catholic attack, and the visit of Gavazzi was defended by Unitarians who had opposed it only because the proceeds were to be given to the Independent School. There does seem however to have been a theological controversy in the town at this time between Joseph Parker and the Parson's Street Infidels, a group of Unitarians, which would explain the involvement of the latter in the mock trial at the Wheatsheaf. The Infidels were led by James Austen, of Parson's Street, one of the leading opponents of the introduction of a liturgy at Christ Church Chapel in 1853. They upheld the teachings of the American Unitarian preacher, Theodore Parker, who was considerably more liberal in his views even than orthodox Unitarians. A poster headed "The Parson's Street Infidels, or Theodore Parker v Joseph Parker" proclaimed that "the only religion everlasting, ever blessed is the religion sought to be incalumniated by the charge of infidelity," a quotation from a tract by Theodore Parker, published in Glasgow in 1852.

The spring of 1856 was perhaps the stormiest period of Parker's ministry in Banbury but it was certainly not the only occasion on which he was the centre of controversy. It is interesting that his Sabbatarianism should have encountered such strong opposition from Unitarians like Potts and Austen, as well as from the free thinker Bunton and certain of the lower orders in the town. It is significant that the Unitarians seem to have supported him against the charges of the Catholics. After the controversy over Signor Gavazzi's visit, the storms of dispute seem to have calmed in the benevolent atmosphere of the celebrations of peace in the Crimea, first announced in Banbury on the 20th May. Parker's impact on Banbury was again shown in September when the foundation stone of the new Independent Chapel in South Bar was laid, and he proudly proclaimed that he would continue to cry "Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy."



\* Most of the literature of the controversy is to be found in the Potts Collection, 1852, pp 107-132, which is kept in the Reference Room at Banbury Public Library. For a short account of the history of the Independent congregation in Banbury see the Banbury Advertiser, 9.10.1957. There is a short description of Parker's ministry in Banbury in Dawson, Albert. Joseph Parker, D.D., His life and ministry. (1901).

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 Banbury Advertiser Ltd., Gatteridge Street, Banbury.           (1960)  
 Banbury Public Library, Marlborough Road, Banbury.  
 Birmingham Reference Library, Birmingham, 1.                       (1960)  
 Northampton Central Public Library, Abington Street, Northampton.  
 Oxford City Library, Central Library, St. Aldates, Oxford. (1960)  
 Oxfordshire County Record Office, County Hall, Oxford.           (1960)  
 Warwickshire County Record Office, Shire Hall, Warwick.       (1960)

We have been sorry to receive the resignations  
of the following :

- Mr. P.M.P. Cornall
- Mr. M.A. Havinden
- Mr. & Mrs. D. Herbert
- Mr. R.G. West

The following have not rejoined :

- Mr. & Mrs. W.H. Butt
- Mr. J.P. Early
- Mr. & Mrs. J.A. Forster
- Miss C. Heywood
- Miss R. Rivers
- Mr. M. Spokes
- Miss G.I. Thorpe
- Miss E.B. Walker
- Mr. G.W. Yeend

