

CAKE AND COCKHORSE



Banbury Historical Society

Spring 1968

2s.6d.

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The 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 & Cockhorse" is issued to members four times a year. This includes illustrated articles based on original local historical research, as well as recording the Society's activities. Publications include "Old Banbury - a short popular history" by E.R.C. Brinkworth (2nd edition), "New Light on Banbury's Crosses", "Roman Banburyshire" and "Banbury's Poor in 1850", all 3/6d, and a pamphlet "History of Banbury Cross", 6d. A Christmas card has been a popular annual production.

The Society also publishes an annual records volume. These have included "Oxfordshire Clock-makers, 1400-1850"; "South Newington Churchwardens' Accounts, 1553-1684"; "Banbury Marriage Register, 1558-1837" (3 parts) and "Baptism and Burial Register, 1558-1653". "A Victorian M.P. and his Constituents: The Correspondence of H. W. Tancred, 1841-1859", "Banbury Politics, 1830-1880", "Banbury Inventories, 1590-1650, and Wills, 1621-1650", and the second part of the Banbury Baptism and Burial Register, 1653-1723, are well advanced.

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 p.m. in the Conservative Club. Talks on general and local archaeological, historical and architectural subjects are given by invited lecturers. In the summer, excursions to local country houses and churches are arranged. Archaeological excavations and special exhibitions are arranged from time to time.

Membership of the Society is open to all, no proposer or seconded being needed. The annual subscription is 40/-, including the annual records volume, or 20/- if this is excluded. Junior membership is 5/-.

Application forms can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary or the Hon. Treasurer.

CAKE AND COCKHORSE

The magazine of the Banbury Historical Society. Issued to members four times a year.
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Thomas Newall, who was buried in St. Mary's church yard on April 16th 1579 is not one of the more famous characters in Banbury's history. He is nevertheless worthy of some slight notice since he is the first of the Banbury weavers whom we know by name. The weaving industry flourished in the town for over three centuries, but as yet we know all too little of its history.

There have been several recent contributions to our knowledge of the trade. Dr. Beckinsale's article in "Oxoniensia" Vol. XXVIII not only gives an admirable account of the rise and fall of plush weaving, but also includes a sketch of the history of weaving in north Oxfordshire before 1750. Miss Taylor's account of the decline of the plush trade in Chapter Five of "Gilletts" shows through the records of one firm just what difficulties the trade was encountering by the 1840's. New evidence on the condition of the weaver in the mid 19th century was provided in the article "Banbury's Poor in 1850" in our Winter issue of 1966-67.

In our current issue we are pleased to publish a number of small items which fill gaps in our knowledge of the history of weaving in Banbury. Mrs. Horn's account of trade unionism among the Banbury weavers in 1834 is part of a much wider study of trade unions in the south Midlands. It is most useful to have this detailed account of a series of events which receives only a tantalisingly brief mention in the report of the Assistant Commissioner in 1838. We are also grateful to Mrs. Horn for her introduction to the rules of the New Society of Plush Weavers, one of the many important sources of local history preserved by Messrs. Cheney and Sons among their specimens of work. The account of Cubitt's plush work shops in 1897 adds some interesting details to Dr. Beckinsale's account of the last days of the plush trade in Banbury.

It is in some ways to be regretted that most of these items are concerned with plush weaving and all of them with the 19th century, but this is largely inevitable since very little work has been done on other aspects of the trade. We look forward at some time in the future to being able to publish an account of the Cobb family's girth trade, and to learning more of the blanket weavers, garter weavers, jersey weavers, linen weavers, silk weavers and stocking weavers who figure so prominently in the Banbury Parish Registers of the 18th century.

Our Cover: shows an illustration from 'The Weaver's Garland, or, A New School of Christian Patience', a ballad broadsheet printed in Banbury by John or Thomas Cheney in the early 19th century, and is reproduced by kind permission of Cheney and Sons Ltd.

SOCIETY NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Programme

Thursday, 22nd February, 7.30 p.m. Conservative Club (next to Martins Bank), High Street, Banbury. "THE VILLAGE OF EYDON". Mr. D.M. Kench. Mr. Kench has put together a delightful study of his village combining tape-recording and colour slides which give a charming and effective study of Eydon. This will be supplemented by a complimentary visual programme on other local historical topics.

Thursday, 21st March, 7.30 p.m. Conservative Club. "DESERTED VILLAGES", talk by Mr. Trevor Rowley. Members will recall the talk on this subject by Mr. J.G. Hurst some years ago. Since then much has been learnt, and it is timely that we should hear of recent developments. Mr. Rowley is an archaeologist and landscape historian who has excavated a number of deserted medieval village sites, particularly in Shropshire. He has made a particular study of settlement patterns in Corvedale, recording many previously unknown deserted villages. He is at present excavating Bordesley Abbey in Redditch New Town.

Recent Meetings

The Society celebrated its Tenth Anniversary with a meeting held in the Town Hall chaired by the Mayor (our member Cllr. Mrs. P. Colegrave) on 28th November. The Speaker was Mr. Paul Harvey, author of the section on Banbury in the Victoria County History, and his subject "Where Were Banbury's Crosses?" (printed in full in the last issue of 'Cake & Cockhorse'). Over 150 members and friends attended to make this a really memorable occasion and a worthy culmination of our first ten years.

It was a happy chance that the first speaker of our 'second decade' should be Dr. E.R.C. Brinkworth, the Society's founder, his subject 'The Bawdy Courts of Banbury' drew a large audience, and we will hope to publish this as an article in due course.

Subscriptions

Members are reminded that subscriptions, due 1st January, have been increased. They are now: Records and Corporate Members, 40/- ; Ordinary Members, 20/- ; Junior Members, still 5/- ; Life Membership, £10 ; Life Members subscribing to the Records Publications, 30/-. Gratifyingly few resignations have been received, and a welcome number of members have eased both the Treasurer's job and their own memories by signing Bankers' Orders.

Records Publications

Subscribers to the Records volumes will be aware that none has yet been published for 1967. For this we apologise. It will be issued to all 1967 subscribers later in 1968, and we believe will be well worth waiting for! It is entitled 'A Victorian M.P. and his Constituents: The Correspondence of H.W. Tancred, 1841-1859', and is edited by Barrie S. Trinder. Tancred was M.P. for Banbury from 1832 to 1859, and these letters are mainly from him to William and John Munton, who acted as Agents for him in Banbury. They give an absorbing backbencher's view of national events and most interesting evidence of the relationship between an M.P. and his constituency.

The volume for 1968 is 'Banbury Wills and Inventories, 1591-1650', edited by E.R.C. Brinkworth and J.S.W. Gibson. This is a collection of about 400 inventories from the Peculiar Court records, with abstracts of related testamentary documents, wills, bonds, accounts, etc. Mr. C.M. Lloyd, reviewing 'Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire, 1550-90' in 'Archives', remarks 'it is to be hoped that at least some future new editions will break new ground. Could we not have... inventories side by side with related wills, and executors' accounts where they exist... concentrating on a single parish with all information on testators which could be found...' Our new volume will attempt just this, with cross-reference to parish registers wherever possible, and with the Oxfordshire volume will give a coverage of published inventories for one place greater than anywhere else in the country.

Articles, Rules and Orders, agreed on by the New Society of Plush-Weavers, at Banbury in the County of Oxford, on the seventh day of October, 1822.

1. This Society shall meet on the last Saturday in every calendar Month, at the home of Mr. Herbert, at the Rein-Deer, Banbury, at the Hour of Six in the Evening, from Michaelmas till Lady-Day; and at the Hour of Seven, from Lady-Day till Michaelmas, for the business here after mentioned; and the Books for such purpose shall be kept open two Hours and not longer.
2. This Society shall consist of an unlimited number of Members of their own trade, that are approved on, as in an article directed and agreed on, and such approved members shall be entitled to the benefit and support of the Society.
3. The express purpose and design of this Society, is to relieve their sick, to bury their dead, and to subscribe to the Infirmary, so that such of their afflicted Members may have better assistance for recovery of their health, and other misfortunes they labour under, & c.
4. In respect to trade, it is mutually agreed, that the prices of all sorts of work, shall be settled between Masters and Men.
5. If any new work of other description than what is now made and executed, be required to be made; then and in such case, a deputation shall from this Society at all such times wait on the Masters, and endeavour to fix and agree on the price in an amicable manner, to the well liking of the Masters and Men, which is most conducive to the good of trade.
6. Every allowance to indisposed Members, and what each and every Member shall weekly subscribe, shall be settled and determined at a general meeting for that purpose, held at the Club-House.
7. Should any Member of this Society be found giving instruction to any unlawful Man, or any Weaver not acknowledge by this Society, he shall be considered as an enemy to the trade and dealt with accordingly.
8. It is hereby agreed, that after this 7th day of October, 1822, no application to receive disapproved Weavers will be admitted; and that any Stranger wanting work, shall make application to this Society, produce his right to the trade, and if approved, may demand a certificate of such right approved, signed by the Stewards; without which certificate, it is recommended to every Member of this Society to be cautious of giving work to any Stranger making such application.
9. That it shall be the duty of every Member to invite all acknowledged and reputed Shag-Weavers to enter this Society as speedily as possible, and that they may form one firm and peaceable body of Workmen, for the general welfare of all concerned and the trade thereof.
10. That every Shag-Weaver of this Society taking an Apprentice, shall make it known to the Society as soon after as he can, the time he was bound to him, that the Lad may be registered in the Society, and be received and acknowledged by it, and considered as having a claim on its protection, the Master to pay for such register in aid of the fund of this Society.
11. That every Member of this Society, or acknowledged and reputed Shag-Weaver, shall be allowed to take an Apprentice for not less than seven years, and at the expiration of the first six years of servitude of such Apprentice, the lawful Master shall have the right of taking another Apprentice for the term of seven years and that at the expiration of the first

six years of his second Apprentice's servitude, the Master shall have right to take a third for seven years, and also a fourth when the third has served six years apprenticeship, for the same term of seven years for each and every Apprentice so taken.

12. That a Feast shall be kept annually, on the first Tuesday in July, by the Members of this Society, the expenses of which shall be settled at a general meeting on the Club-Night before the said Feast.
13. That any master giving employment to any Member of this Society, or to any lawful Workman applying for the same, shall previously thereto, either discharge his debt contracted with the last Master he serves, or release him from his employ whenever he shall be demanded back by such Master he has so left in arrears.
14. That no Shag-Weaver shall be allowed to take an Apprentice after he is fourteen years old.
15. There shall be allowed out of the fund of this Society, forty shillings on the death of any Member, for his burial, when there is ten pounds in the box, provided such Member has paid to it one whole year.
16. Should any new Member die before the expiration of the first year, he shall be buried by a subscription of the whole Society.
17. Any member not keeping silence in Club-Hours, when called on so to do by the Chairman, shall forfeit for each offence twopence, to be applied in aid of the fund of the Society.
18. It is agreed from the 7th day of October 1822, that all Weavers' Sons shall be admitted to learn the branch of Plush-Weaving, at their Father's discretion; the Father is not allowed to take an Apprentice, till his last Son has served six years.
(Footnote) In Addition to the 18th Article - it is agreed by a majority of Members, at a meeting held the 3rd day of January, 1825, that no Weaver's Son shall claim the trade, except the eldest, without serving seven years; in the case of the Father's death, the Son to be turned over to some lawful Weaver.
19. It is mutually agreed by the trade in general, that all that are in employ at this time, are to remain so, but from the 7th day of October 1822, no one to be admitted into the trade, unless he can show a legal right to the same

Thomas Herbert, Jun.)
William Jones) Stewards

Edward Ewer, Sen.) Father.

Joseph Prescott) Clerk.

E. Cheney, Printer, Bookseller, Binder, & Stationer, High-Street, Banbury.

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Editor's note: The original of the "Articles, Rules and Orders" is preserved by Messrs. Cheney and Sons among their collection of Specimens of Work. We are most grateful to the firm for permission to reproduce the document here.

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The New Society of Plush Weavers, which was established at Banbury on the 7th October, 1822, was very much in the eighteenth century tradition of trade societies, with its concern to preserve the status and position of its craftsmen members and to safeguard them from the competition of unapprenticed workers. Indeed, it is possible that the roots of the Society in fact went back to a predecessor which had existed in the 1790's and the behaviour of whose members had caused much alarm to a local J.P., Robert Spillman. In August, 1793, he reported to Henry Dundas, then Home Secretary, that the weavers' association and its laws had set "those of their country at defiance. Upon the least disagreement, or whenever they choose to raise the price of their wages, they with one voice leave their looms and subsist upon a fund they have raised for that purpose". He went on to state that: "About three weeks ago, one of their Society transgressed their laws by taking an apprentice; this was sufficient for the body to assemble and repair to the master by whom this individual was employed, to demand of him a dismissal of the pretended offender. This was not complied with. The consequence was, every man working for the same master, amounting to 300, left his work and as usual lived upon their stock until Friday last, when it was discovered, one of the men, contrary to their order, had betook himself to work, which was sufficient to reassemble the body. Yesterday they met in this place, and a body of about 200 paraded the streets with martial music, and then proceeded to a place two miles distant, the residence of the man so working, and violently took his piece of shag from the loom and triumphantly returned two and two, with each a green bough in his hat,"

Although the Riot Act was read, the marchers insisted on taking the shag to the door of the master to whom it belonged - and even when some of them were arrested they were rescued by their fellows. Small wonder that Spillman wrote in a state of some excitement and alarm to the Home Secretary.¹

The rules of the New Society certainly did not make provision for this type of militant conduct. The Society was essentially defensive in character, unlike some contemporary organisations among, for instance, the cloth workers of Lancashire and the ribbon weavers of Coventry, which made specific demands for wage increases or provided for the payment of dispute pay to members on strike. The Home Office papers show that over a number of years a Combination Committee among the journeymen spinners of Bolton-le-Moors, Lancashire, gave financial assistance from union funds to men on strike - "in February, 1822, the same books shew the same sort of support given for several months together to Mr. Wylde's spinners when they struck".² A number of other similar examples could be quoted.

It must be remembered that at this time any combination of workmen was, strictly speaking, illegal, both under the Combination Acts which were then in operation and under the provisions of the common law. Therefore, if the masters so desired they could initiate proceedings against workers who were members of a trade union or trade society. This was not usually done unless an employer was particularly inconvenienced by the actions of a society - but the existence of such a threat obviously tended to restrain the leaders of trade organisations from acting in a rash or provocative manner. Although the Banbury employers did not "like" the weavers' club, according to the Report of the Assistant Commissioner who investigated Hand Loom Weaving in the town in 1838, they neither offered it positive opposition nor initiated any proceedings against it. No doubt, to some extent, they found it a convenient method of negotiating piece-rate prices with the weavers - as many other masters did.⁴ On the other hand, the existence of these legal restrictions probably helps to make clear the reasons for the society's third rule - namely that its "express purpose and design (was) to relieve their sick, to bury their dead, and to subscribe to the Infirmary. . ." Many other trade societies at this time found it convenient to hide their light under a Friendly Society bushel, in an attempt to escape possible reprisals from employers.⁵

From the weavers' point of view the society was valuable in so far as it restricted entry to the trade to those who had served a full apprenticeship, i. e. it sought to exclude the semi-skilled or imperfectly trained worker and thereby attempted to regulate the supply of labour. This control of the labour supply was obviously to ensure that the prices paid to the weavers for their work were at least maintained at their existing level, and were not depressed by the influx of a flood of new workers into the industry. The apprenticeship regulations, too, were designed . . .

to achieve this same end of control of the labour force.

Finally, although the emphasis on friendly society activities may have been a convenient way of diverting attention from the trade combination side of the society's work, this is by no means certain. The Banbury society was, in fact, following well-established eighteenth century principles applicable to the trade organisations of what the Webbs have called "an isolated 'ring' of highly skilled journeymen . . . who found their trade clubs of use mainly for the provision of friendly benefits and for 'higgling' with their masters for better terms". In any case, the Banbury weavers may genuinely have desired the allowance to "indisposed members" envisaged in Rule 6, and the cash payment at death envisaged in Rules 15 and 16, through which the indignity of a pauper's death would be avoided.

At first the Banbury society would appear to have been successful - at least so far as its 'higgling' with the employers was concerned; George Herbert in 'Shoemaker's Window' mentions the continuing effect of the society's regulations on apprenticeship conditions, etc., even though in his day the society itself had largely "fallen off".⁶ The Assistant Commissioner already quoted remarked upon the "very considerable standing" of the club, with its provisions for "mutual assistance". It was noted that through the club the Banbury weavers had "long been accustomed to send committees to treat with the masters". Nevertheless, despite this continued observance of the rules of the society, active membership of it had declined dramatically; according to the Assistant Commissioner, by 1838, it only amounted to "a small body of 21", who met together "to discuss the interests of the trade and spend 3d weekly".⁷

The reasons for the decline in formal membership can only be guessed at, but it seems very likely that as the idea of established negotiating committees became generally accepted, so the attractions of regular monthly meetings, etc., were reduced. Then, too, for the more fiery spirits the essentially defensive nature of the combination was probably somewhat dampening, and this became even more the case when the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824 made possible the legal establishment of trade unions. Unions sprang up all over the country, and the more positive demands they put forward for raising wages and improving the conditions of employment caused them to appeal to many workers who were tired of the old 'exclusive' character of the trade society. Among these the Banbury plush weavers may be included.

Pamela Horn

1. H.O. 42/26 - Quoted in "The Early English Trade Unions" by A. Aspinall, M.A., D.Litt. (1949) - p. 19.
2. Op. cit. - pp. 368-371.
3. S. & B. Webb - History of Trade Unionism (1950 edn.) p. 74.
4. Ibid.
5. See p. 91 - British Working Class Movements - Select Documents, 1789-1875 - G.D.H. Cole and A.W. Filson - 1965 edn.
6. G. Herbert - Shoemaker's Window (Oxford, 1948) - pp. 112/113.
7. Report from Commissioners on Hand Loom Weavers - 1840 - Vol. XXIV, pp. 333-335.

THE BANBURY WEAVERS UNION OF 1834

In February, 1834, the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union of Great Britain and Ireland was formally inaugurated in London. This impressively-named organisation aimed at "consolidating all the trades unions throughout the country into a single united body" and had as its long-term objects the settlement of workers on the land and the establishment of union workshops in which artisans could be employed, working on the co-operative principle instead of for masters, as under the existing economic set-up.⁽¹⁾ Each trade was to have its Grand Lodge, to which were attached district or branch lodges to operate locally, and the district lodges were to establish their own sick and aged funds.

The creation of this association acted as a stimulus to trade union activity throughout the country, although it was by no means the only large organisation concerned in that sphere. In particular, in Lancashire and Yorkshire the cloth workers had their own societies - in the latter county for example, the stuff and worsted workers of Bradford and the clothmakers of Leeds formed part of a strong organisation known as the "Yorkshire Trades Union".

Within this broad framework of union activity the plush weavers of Banbury determined to play a part. Banbury had for many years been a centre of considerable importance for the manufacture of plush, although by the beginning of 1834 that importance was perhaps dwindling.⁽²⁾ The plush weavers had long had a trade club, which met in a local public house to discuss the "interests of the trade and spend 3d. weekly." Although it did aim to preserve apprenticeship conditions within the industry and to treat with the masters on these matters, its importance was essentially limited.⁽³⁾ In the light of unrest felt in many sections of the labouring classes this club seemed quite inadequate, and the Banbury men began to think in terms of forming a trade union.

It should, perhaps, at this stage be noted that out of a total population in Banbury and its hamlets of approximately 6,427 in 1831, about 550 were said to be engaged in plush weaving, in addition to women and children employed in other branches of the trade; within the town itself, however, only about 125 men were employed in plush and girth making, according to the population returns.⁽⁴⁾ Some of these weavers decided to form themselves into a lodge of what the local newspapers term "the Bradford Order of Weavers," but which was no doubt part of the Yorkshire Trade Union mentioned above.⁽⁵⁾ In all, membership of the lodge was estimated to have reached a level of 280, but before it could firmly establish itself, the masters decided to act quickly to oppose it. On 15th March, the thirteen most active members of it were dismissed from their employment for their participation in its formation.

At this point, by a strange coincidence, two tailors, named Petrie and Thomas entered the town - quite uninvited, as all the contemporary newspapers agree - as representatives of a London-based lodge of the Grand National Consolidated Union of Great Britain and Ireland. They came at a most opportune moment. It would seem that no pecuniary transactions had taken place between the Banbury men and their Bradford headquarters, but the action of the masters in dismissing the unionists made it appear imperative for the latter to have some immediate financial support. This Petrie and Thomas readily agreed to provide, declaring that they were quite ready to form lodges and initiate members in connection with their society.

In these circumstances a lodge of the union was rapidly formed at Banbury in place of that connected with the Bradford society, and sixty-five weavers, plus "many of other trades" were initiated that same evening. A subscription of 6d. per head was paid by the members, plus 10s. from the branch for what was called a dispensation, i. e. a printed document setting forth the aims of the organisation.⁽⁶⁾ This was the formal authorisation for the establishment of a branch, as provided for in Rule X of the Grand National's constitution. In return for their subscriptions each member was given a membership card, while the initiation involved the giving of an oath and the holding of a ceremony "with the mummery of surplises, gowns, swords and wooden axes."⁽⁷⁾ This type of initiation was very common in the early days of trade unionism, since it was felt that the new entrant could by that means best be impressed with the necessity for secrecy and loyalty to his fellow members.

After the formation of the lodge, Petrie, appreciating the likelihood of great hostility on the part of the masters, dictated a letter to the Executive Council of the union, asking for £100 to be sent to the Banbury lodge, to be expended upon the establishment of a co-operative work shop in which the men could be employed independently of their masters. At the same time the two delegates made inquiries as to the cost of materials, etc., and according to a rather hostile account in the Northampton Mercury of 31st May, they so duped the men that they thought that they would "all be made masters".

Disillusionment rapidly followed. The masters pursued their policy of determined opposition, and as the unionists finished the work they had in hand they were dismissed⁽⁸⁾. Altogether about 200 of the weavers joined the new organization, and as they were gradually thrown out of work they relied for relief upon a common fund which was replenished from the wages of those who were still in work; naturally these contributions were only small and proved totally inadequate to maintain the unemployed, as their numbers grew. An attempt was made to organise a subscription among other Banbury workmen but this failed, while the parish officers responsible for the disbursement of poor law relief were said to have "set their faces against the unionists."⁽⁹⁾ In addition, the expected help from the London Executive Council did not materialise and so the members of the Banbury lodge decided to write to London. Their first letters brought replies "full of sympathy for their situation", - but no money was remitted. It was stated that, "our friends of Derby require all the assistance we are able to give them." There was some justification for this view since the Derby masters and unionists were engaged in a mighty struggle for supremacy at this time, and the men had been locked out on a large scale. However, it was of no consolation to the Banbury weavers, and eventually, when their letters began to go unanswered, it was decided that two of them should form a deputation and go to London to present their case to the Council.

This was done, and the men received 10s. from the Council to cover the expense of their journey, plus a remittance of £5 which was despatched after their return. Naturally this sum proved inadequate with the growing demands made upon the Banbury funds and once again the weavers wrote to explain their plight. However, as this failed to elicit any response it was agreed, in the last week of April, that two further men should go up to see the Council. By this time the men were said to have been reduced to the utmost state of destitution, with the "wives and children of some of them weeping for want of bread, potatoes being, it is said, in more instances than one their only food."⁽¹⁰⁾

These two final representatives spent three days in London. They went first of all to the Hercules Pillars, which was situated in Great Queen Street and which was the headquarters of the Executive Council, and there they saw the members of the Council⁽¹¹⁾. These were said to be five tailors. The Council denied ever having received the final letters from Banbury and indicated that it was possible that the Government had confiscated them at the post office before they had been delivered. The Banbury weavers felt suspicious of this explanation, however, and decided to go and see the corresponding secretary of the union. He quite readily admitted having received the letters and said they had been given to him by one of the members of the Executive Council.

Armed with this information the deputation returned to the Executive Council and asked the members outright whether or not their claim would receive any sympathetic consideration. The latter still denied having received the correspondence, and then one of the Banbury men revealed that the corresponding secretary of the union had told him that not only had he (the secretary) got the letters but that they had been given to him by a member of the council. An embarrassed silence naturally followed, and then one of the members of the council admitted having had the letters and handing them on to the secretary; he apologised for it having slipped his memory, and the deputation was sent away with 5s. - plus the promise of further help in the future.

As before, no more financial help was received, and further letters sent were again unanswered. The Banbury lodge did nevertheless receive two gifts from a lodge of weavers in Spitalfields - one of £10 and the other £5, which helped to relieve their misery to some degree, but not their growing bitterness against the Union.⁽¹²⁾

This latter feeling finally boiled over when it was announced in the Radical newspaper "Pioneer" that a levy was to be made of 1s. 6d. upon all lodges belonging to the National Consolidated Trades Union, to help the tailors locked out in London. Once again a letter was sent by the Banbury men, who by this time must have earned a reputation for persistence at least among the members of the Executive Council of their Grand Lodge. In this letter they stated: "We do not complain of lack of sympathy, compassion, or promises, of each of which we have had our share, and believe us when we say if these kind feelings from London and elsewhere (with the exception of Spitalfields) could have filled our bellies, we should have more resembled the bluff appearance of His Majesty's beef eaters at St. James's rather than so many clock cases with a tick-tack of hunger sounding in the vicinity of our stomachs. . . . In consulting the "Pioneer" of this week we notice a proclamation emanating from the tailors whose strike has recently occurred, that 1s. 6d. levy be immediately laid on all lodges belonging to the National Consolidated Trades Union generally. Now, although we wish well to all our Brothers, to whatever trade or occupation they may belong, we cannot help observing that as the limited boundaries of their strike, by a circumference round Covent Garden, computed at 24 miles, we think by the same rule that they ought to have a limited boundary to their levy; and had a levy of 3d. been laid on for us, it would have raised us above our present distressed condition.

"We remain in the bonds of Union, &c." (13)

Despite the statement made at the conclusion of the letter, the Banbury lodge did not remain in existence much longer. Three more letters were sent to the London Executive and remained unanswered - that body was in any case desperately short of funds; apart from the initial subscription there is no indication that the Banbury men had sent any further money to London. In these circumstances it is scarcely surprising that by the third week of May a decision had been taken to dissolve the Banbury Lodge. Unfortunately those who had been locked out were not able to return to work immediately even after they had renounced the union, partially because blacklegs had been found to carry on their work. The Northampton Mercury of 24th May remarked rather maliciously that the "Black sheep" (i. e. the anti-unionists) were better off than the "Brown sheep" (i. e. the unionists), who were out of work "in Banbury and neighbourhood." According to the Report from J. Fletcher for the Commissioners on Hand Loom Weavers, dated December, 1838, this experience had made the men "very submissive." (14)

It was perhaps inevitable that the weavers' attempt to form a union branch should fail; internal communications were poor at this time, so that speedy consultation with the Executive Council was not possible, even if the latter had been willing. The hostility of the employers was also a powerful factor, and one which was made more impressive by the smallness of the number of masters in the town, viz. three. Furthermore, trade unionism was held in great general disfavour in these years, as the following extract indicates. It was inserted in the Oxford University, City and County Herald of 5th April, 1834, and was copied from the Somersetshire Gazette: "We learn from a correspondent that the Trades Unions are spreading to a fearful extent Unless means be found to suppress the secret societies forming in the different provinces of the kingdom, no man's life or property can be safe for a moment; and England may expect ere long the same sanguinary measures that are at once the disgrace and terror of the Irish people."

Opposition of this character, coupled with the weavers' own inexperience of Union matters and their lack of financial resources not surprisingly led to wholesale collapse, to the great misery of those affected. There is little doubt that the Banbury weavers were badly treated by the London Executive Council, although it might be said in defence of the latter that they were no doubt being overwhelmed with similar requests from all over the country. Certainly the Banbury men's position was held up as a warning to others, and must have acted as a deterrent to would-be unionists in the area. As one contemporary newspaper put it: "Let this be a warning to men, who belong to the Trades Union as now conducted, no longer to entrust their destinies to the Executive Council, or the fate of the Banbury Operatives will surely be theirs." (15)

Nevertheless, it would seem that not all recollection of the hopes and aspirations of 1834 was lost by the weavers, for, in 1852, when the masters tried to impose a cut in wages, they retaliated by calling a strike and by forming a Banbury Plush Weavers' Co-operative Society.⁽¹⁶⁾ Consideration of the latter organisation, however, falls outside the scope of this article.

Pamela Horn

References

1. G. D. H. Cole - Attempts at General Unionism - pp. 122/123 (London 1953).
2. For an opposite view, viz. that there had been no decline, see Beesley - A History of Banbury - London, 1841 - p. 566.
3. Report from Commissioners on Hand Loom Weavers - Vol. XXIV - (1840) - p. 335.
4. Northampton Mercury - 31st May, 1834, and Beesley op. cit. There were restrictions on the employment of women and children for weaving in Banbury itself, imposed by the trade.
5. G. D. H. Cole - op. cit. - p. 69. Perhaps information about this society was brought to Banbury by migratory workers, like George Herbert's grandfather, who was said to have come from Leeds (p. 1. Shoemaker's Window - George Herbert). Herbert's grandfather had, of course, come many years before 1834.
6. Jackson's Oxford Journal - 24th May, 1834.
7. Ibid.
8. According to R. P. Beckinsale - The Plush Industry of Oxfordshire Vol. XXVIII Oxoniensia - an average weaver would produce a piece of 44 yards' dimension in a month, for which he received about £3. Approximately ten pieces would normally be produced in a year. (See also Beesley, op. cit., p. 567.)
9. Northampton Mercury - 31st May, 1834.
10. Northampton Mercury - 31st May, 1834.
11. It is possible that the Hercules Pillars is the building mentioned by Alexander Somerville as the meeting place for the "union parliament", with its "daily and nightly committees; secret deputations proceeded from it, to secret committees sitting elsewhere." (p. 266) - The Autobiography of a Working Man - 1951 Edition.
12. This was a case of the poor helping the poor. "It is doubtful whether an occupational group more miserable and long-suffering than the Spitalfields silk-weavers could have been found anywhere in England." - A. R. Schoyen - The Chartist Challenge - London, 1958 - p. 31.
13. Oxford University, City and County Herald - 24th May, 1834.
14. Report from Commissioners on Hand Loom Weavers - 1840 - Vol. XXIV - p. 333.
15. Jackson's Oxford Journal - 24th May, 1834.
16. See 'Banbury's Poor in 1850' by Barrie S. Trinder - Cake and Cockhorse - Winter 1966, Vol. 3 p. 110.

We are most grateful to Miss H Clow of Headley Down, Hants', and formerly of Banbury for bringing to our attention a copy of 'Views and Reviews, Special Edition, Banbury', (Brighton 1897) This is a most useful historical source, and as far as is known no copy survives in Banbury. The most valuable section is a series of descriptions of most of the leading businesses in Banbury, from which we are re-printing accounts of the three surviving examples of the weaving trade. In due course other extracts will appear in 'Coke and Cockhorse'.

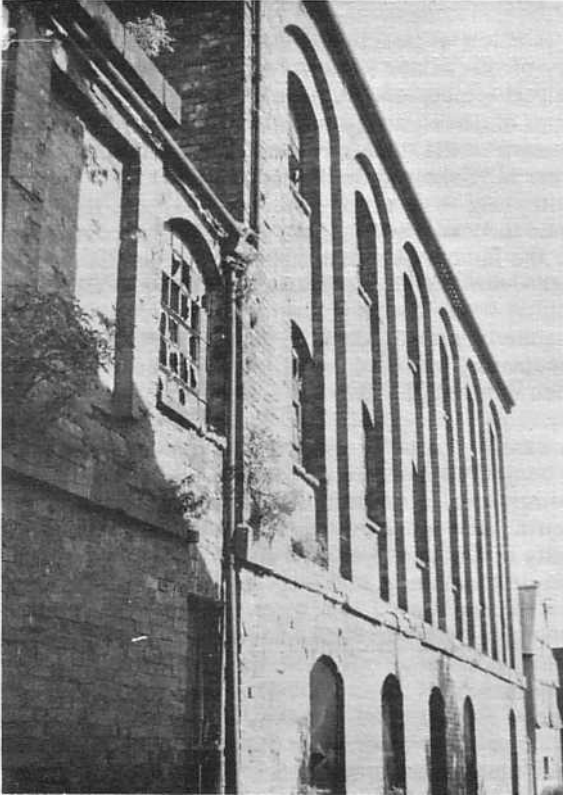
Cubitt's was one of two plush-making firms which survived in Banbury in 1897. The other, that of John Hill, was not mentioned in 'Views and Reviews', and ceased operations in 1897. Cubitt's still possessed at this time the famous Bessemer embosser, originally supplied to Gillett, Lees, and Company in 1837. When Cubitt's ceased operations in 1909 the embosser was sold to Messrs. Wrench of Shutford.

The making of horse cloth was the longest lived of the Banbury textile industries, dating back to 1701 when the Cobb family manufactory was established, or perhaps even earlier. By the end of the 19th century it was very much reduced in scale, as the account of Walker's shows, though it survived at this level until 1932.

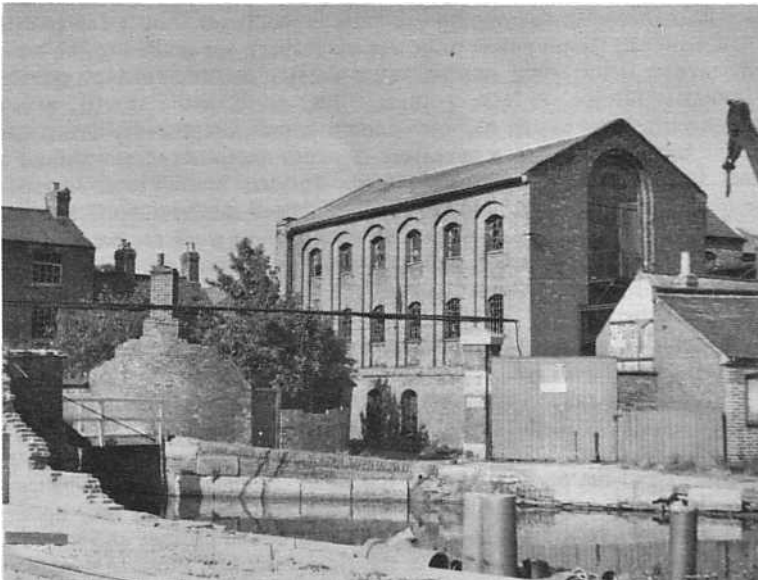
The Banbury Tweed Company dated from 1870, when it took over the girth cloth factory in Factory Street sold in that year by Timothy Rhodes Cobb. The tone of the account in 'Views and Reviews' is perhaps rather over optimistic since the firm closed down in 1902. Some reminiscences of the tweed company and of the girth trade appeared on p.43 of our Spring issue of 1966. Further details of the Banbury textile industry at this period may be found in Dr. R.P. Beckinsale's article, "The Plush Industry of Oxfordshire", in Oxoniensia Vol. XXVIII, especially pp. 63-67.

Messrs. Cubitt, Son, and Co., Livery and Furniture Plush Manufacturers,
Banbury Cross Works.

The Banbury Cross Works of Messrs. Cubitt, Son, and Co., have a special interest for the student of industrial art. They are the only surviving works of their kind now remaining in Banbury, where once the plush industry formed a staple trade; and although they have felt the influence of modern innovation and improvement, they retain, to a greater extent than any other establishment in the town or district, the characteristics and traditions of the past. The plush industry, as represented in the productions of Messrs. Cubitt, Son, and Co., is in fact a special department of trade, and close associated with art. Steam power and mechanical appliances have proved of incalculable service to mankind in developing the various industries, but it can scarcely be said that the employment either of steam power or power machinery has tended to the advancement of art. Indeed, the reverse is the truth, and wherever we find the ancient high standard of artistic taste maintained in textile fabrics, in lace, poplins, silks, plush, etc., it will, as a rule, be found that the work has been turned out by the old-fashioned methods where every detail is controlled by the trained eye and hand of the human operator. Modern machinery has attained a marvellous degree of perfection, but it can never compete with the cultured human brain in artistic work, and thus, although Messrs. Cubitt, Son, and Co., have utilised modern appliances wherever it is possible to do so with advantage, the essential features of their work are based on old-fashioned methods, and are conducted with the aid of old-fashioned appliances, controlled by specially trained experts of long experience. Indeed, most of the principal workers have been in the service of the firm practically all their lives, and show a marvellous degree of skill and taste in their craft. Art itself is progressive, however, and the firm are constantly producing new and beautiful specialities in art patterns and novelties, and their productions in high class plush goods for liveries, wall hangings, upholstery and decorative purposes, have a unique and distinctive celebrity. The business now controlled by Messrs. Cubitt was originally established in the year 1810, and was carried on for many years by Messrs. Gillett and Lees, the practical management being in the hands of Mr Cubitt, father of the present head of the firm. Eventually Mr Cubitt acquired the entire business and on his death, was succeeded in the proprietorship by his son, under whose able administration the industry has continued, not only to exist, but to prosper and to grow. The premises are situated at the top of High Street, in the Horsefair, and close to Banbury Cross. They



The two photographs show part of the former Cobb family girth cloth mill in Factory Street, which took its name from the mill. The building bears the date 1837. In 1870 the mill was taken over by the Banbury Tweed Company.



are approached through an interesting old-fashioned courtyard, and have a very quaint and picturesque appearance. The weaving-room contains fifteen or sixteen hand-loom, arranged alongside the windows on each side, and these looms are themselves among the most interesting links between old and modern Banbury. They are of quaint design, but eminently well adapted for the production of these special fabrics, and they have another and a historic interest, from the fact that they were constructed from the ancient oak timber obtained from the old cruciform parish church of Banbury on its demolition in 1792. In these looms are turned out some of the most beautiful plushes of the present day, from silk, mohair, worsted, cotton yarn, etc. In other departments we find in progress the various operations of shaving, finishing and embossing, etc., the embossing being executed with large steel rollers having the patterns cut in relief. The rollers are heated, and as they revolve slowly on the web of plush, permanently impress the design on the fabric. Very beautiful designs are produced, among the most notable being some remarkably fine patterns cut by the hands of the famous Henry Bessemer about the time of Her Majesty's accession to the throne. The firm also still preserve the roller from which was stamped the plush upholsterings of the House of Lords and House of Commons, and they turn out some of the finest productions of the present day in art and antique plush designs for the re-upholstering of Chippendale and other famous antique furniture. Their livery plush is unrivalled for texture and richness of tints, the dyeing being executed with great care at a special dyeworks alongside the river; and the firm supply the Royal blue and scarlet plush used for the Queen's servants, besides many shades for other Court liveries and the servants of titled families. They also turn out a number of makes for coach-builders, and for covering machine rollers used for finishing woollen cloths. They have also a new speciality in tapestry plushes for wall hangings and general decorative purposes. Altogether the Banbury Cross Works are highly interesting, and will well repay a visit on the part of those interested in those special industries in which our manufacturers have, in spite of much competition, maintained the national reputation for artistic taste and delicate manipulation. The works form a sort of little commonwealth in themselves, the most cordial goodwill and unity prevailing between the firm and their employees, many of whom are veterans in the service. Mr. T.H. Cubitt, the present proprietor, has been connected with the Banbury Cross Works for over thirty-five years.

Messrs. J. Walker and Son, Saddlers' Ironmongers, Webbing and Binding Manufacturers, 17 and 18, North Bar.

There are still a few industries left where modern power machinery fails entirely to supplant hand labour. The marvellous damasks for instance, produced at Ardoyne and Lisburn near Belfast, are not to be made, even to this day except by hand. And looking through the warehouse and works carried on in Banbury for generations past under the above style, we stumbled on another rare industry, viz., the making of saddlers' webbings and bindings, by the old-fashioned hand loom, these webbings and bindings being of that quality which apparently can withstand any amount of hard usage for a very lengthy period. The business is entirely wholesale, and is carried on in commodious three-storey premises in North Bar, especially adapted to its requirements, having been fitted up to the designs of the present proprietor when the premises were rebuilt and considerably enlarged a few years ago. The firm are providers for the saddlery and harness trades throughout the Midlands, amongst a vast number of the members of which they have old and solidly established connections, based on the superior quality of the goods supplied.

Entering the warehouse, the visitor finds a convenient and well appointed office on the left, immediately connected with a large room devoted entirely to general trade furnishings and small wares. Behind this is a room for all kinds of leather, while at the rear is one well filled with paddings or stuffings, known in the trades as flocks. To the right of this floor is the packing room, and also the store room for steel and other rustable goods which require heat daily to keep them in proper condition. There is a large cellar underneath, where are stored all kinds of blackings, compos embrocations, soaps, metal pastes, etc. Ascending to the first floor, one finds the harness store in the front room, replete with a large variety of harness and saddlery. The intermediate room is full of collar checks, linings, etc., of many shades and colours. In the rear is

probably the most interesting room in the store, for here are the woollen webbings and bindings of the firm's famous make. The stock is simply enormous, pointing to a wide-spread trade, not confined to home, as the products have been sent at various times to Australia, India, Canada, South America, and other parts of the world. The firm have already made upwards of seven hundred different patterns, and the number is constantly being added to. On yet another floor high is to be found in the front room a very large assortment of ready made rugs, and a quantity of ruggings and kerseys ready to be made up. In the middle room is the stock of yarns in all colours, from which the webs and bindings are made. The room at the rear is filled with every kind of brush and other stable requisites. Behind the warehouse is another building entirely devoted to saddle trees, oils, and other goods of a very inflammable nature. Still further back is the factory, with its weavers and winders, and the hand looms that still stand before power driven machinery in making that quality of webbings for which this firm are so noted.

The proprietor of this old established business for the past twenty years has been Mr. John Wilks, a well known and influential gentleman in Banbury, who was elected a Town Councillor in November, 1894. Mr Wilks is the active manager of the whole concern, which still grows and flourishes in his experienced hands. He has been for some years ably assisted by his son, Mr. Fred J. Wilks, who for the past five and a half years has done the whole of the travelling.

The Banbury Woollen Tweed Company Limited

The above firm was originally started as a private enterprise about twenty-five years ago by Messrs Platt and Medley. The mill was so conducted for five years, when it was completely destroyed by fire. The owner of the property then united with the proprietors of the business in re-building the mills and converting it into a limited company with a capital of £25,000. The buildings are extensive, and the machinery, which is of the most modern kind, embraces all the requisites for enabling the Company to take the wool in its raw state, and conduct it through every stage until it becomes the finished fabric. The Company has lately introduced Lister's new patent condensers, which enable it to produce yarn, and consequently fabric, as cheaply as any firm in the United Kingdom, while it still maintains its reputation for producing only high class Tweeds, which will compare favourably with any of their kind, vis., superior saddle Tweeds and suitings. It has also recently laid down a new 200 horse power Galloway engine to meet increasing demands, and has made other important changes to keep pace with the times, a thoroughly practical manager being at the helm. The Company supplies the leading firms of the world, and has always a limited stock in hand to meet urgent orders. The staff, especially so far as the heads of departments are concerned, is one which has taken years to get together, and which, we believe, cannot be excelled in any part of the kingdom, as only the most skilled and experienced departmental labour is employed. In order to sell first class goods at reasonable prices, the most rigid and careful economy is practised, and as nothing but genuine wool is used, the general result is a fabric that is durable, warm, and kindly to the wearer, and yet sufficiently neat and tasteful for a prince to wear. It would be difficult to find a firm possessed of greater facilities in the way of plant, modern appliances and excellent sources of supply, or one which carries on the manufacture with greater care. The directors of the Company are Messrs. T. O. Hankinson (Chairman) L. Tearle, T. Amos and J. Hyde

Edgehill 1642, The Campaign and the Battle, by Brigadier Peter Young.
Roundwood Press, Kineton, 1967. £3. 5s.

Brigadier Young's eagerly awaited and much heralded book on Edgehill can be approached by amateur and professional historian without fear of disappointment. It is exciting in appearance, well printed, delightfully illustrated.

Despite its title, the book probes deeply into other aspects of the Civil War and shows the author's awareness of the larger historical issues involved. It is divided into three parts. The first portrays the army of the period; the second deals with the Edgehill campaign, and the last contains relevant documents. This final section, together with appendices, takes up half the book, but this should not put off that indefinable figure the "general reader". These documents can be taken at leisure, but the first two parts of the book have a gathering momentum which demands increasing attention.

The battle itself is brilliantly covered. From the welter of confused and conflicting reports, the author extracts as clear a picture as possible. Where definite evidence fails, his scholarly suppositions get the reader as near to the truth as present resources permit. It is only when one has read the selection of documents relating to the battle in Part Three that the skill of Peter Young's analysis is appreciated. Outstanding is his picture of Rupert's charge, as vigorous and dramatic in print as it must have been in reality. Where confusion does appear, as in the disposition and movement of Essex's forces after the royalist cavalry charges, it is largely a reflection of that "frightful" confusion that existed before Kineton in that late autumn afternoon 325 years ago. The part played by the King himself is interestingly emphasised, and the fate of the Royal Standard is a good tale well told. Evidence is scanty for the Parliamentary army, but what there is, is here carefully woven into the text and printed in full in the Appendix. One is left with Peter Young admiring the many stoic Foot of both sides who slogged it out "at push of pike" till nightfall, then to endure the bitter, hungry hours when the blood of the wounded literally froze.

Throughout, the text is enriched and enlivened by the author's detailed military knowledge; not of the flying plumes and rattling scabbards variety, but of the type which tells us how long it took to re-load and fire a cannon, the exact weights of musket-balls, and precise colours of the uniforms (an elaborate and lurid variety indeed!) There is humour too of the somewhat burlesque military type. A maid is accidentally shot at Wendover, after which the soldiers "marched very sadly two miles". Edmund Ludlow loses his servant after the battle, and is obliged to clank about all night in a suit of iron, keeping warm as best he could. There is "throw-away" information also. We read that Henry Wilmot, a royal Lieutenant-General, "had the dubious distinction of siring the foremost libertine of the age, John Wilmot, Second Earl of Rochester". The pedants will frown, but many will find these additions increase the book's attractions.

No book is perfect. Local and military historians will find the index of this one far from adequate, a serious defect in a book which will often be used for reference. The general reader would probably find a glossary useful. A pull-out plan of Plate 10 (the deployment of forces before the battle) would prevent needless turning back, and at least a selection of references should be placed as footnotes to avoid constant turning forward to the chapter end. There are frequent tantalizing references to Banbury and its castle, but local readers may feel that the town deserves fuller treatment.

But when all adverse criticism has been levelled, we are left with a good history book, a new synthesis of old material, interlaced with a soldier's wry and perceptive comments, together with some new evidence - even a new ghost story.

Rambles Round the Edge Hills, by George Miller. 3rd Edition, with a Foreword by Anthony C. Wood. Roundwood Press. Kineton. 1967. £1. 15s.

George Miller, vicar of Radway from 1860 to 1909, was, like so many Victorian scholar-parsons, an indefatigable seeker after historical knowledge of his locality. He can indeed be counted among the pioneers of local historical studies, for he was among the first to make use of Hearth Tax Returns, he made detailed studies of the history of local prices, and he made notes of dialects which probably survive in no other source. His "Rambles Round the Edge Hills" was first published by William Potts of the "Banbury Guardian" in 1896, and an enlarged second edition was published in London four years later. The book has been difficult to obtain for some years, and many people interested in South Warwickshire will welcome this third edition, published, appropriately, at Kineton, last year.

Miller was a most enthusiastic scholar. One sentence: "The author was able to discover this additional information a few weeks back in the Bodleian Library" is sufficient to reveal what must have been a boundless energy for research. Unfortunately much of his scholarship has been overtaken by more recent studies. Mr. Wood points out in his foreword that in only eight out of nineteen cases are Miller's explanations of village names endorsed by the work of the English Place-Name Society. Like so many Victorian medievalists, he enjoyed speculating on the meaning of the Hide, but for the modern reader the debate on this most elusive of terms has lost much of its freshness. It is certainly interesting to see the results of Miller's labours on the early history of the parishes he describes, but it would be idle to claim that his findings are of great value to the modern historian.

There is a great deal of value in the Rambles however, much of it the reminiscences of Miller himself and those he met on his travels. It is interesting to learn of aspects of the history of his own family not available elsewhere; of Sanderson Miller's apparently profitable enterprise in carrying goods from Cxford to Banbury in flat bottomed boats along the River Cherwell in the late 17th century for example. Miller describes how Edward Bouverie Pusey drew up rules for the allotments in Ratley which were so good and practical that they were used at other places in the district. He describes some of the many occupants of Upton House in the 19th century; a useful service for a house which changed hands so often. His quotation from an old retainer of the Compton family who remembered the dereliction of Compton Wyniattes, "Elections, sir! elections! They did the harm that brought the hammer into many a good old house", is delightful. The book abounds in amusing anecdotes, one of the best being that of the vicar newly preferred by the North family reading from the Psalms on his first Sunday in his new parish "Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south". The traditional tales and topographical information on the Battle of Edgehill are of considerable value.

The third edition is very attractively produced. With appendices and foreword it runs to over 150 pages. The frontispiece is an excellent colour plate of John Speed's Map of Warwickshire of 1610, and the half tone illustrations are of very high quality, the photograph of the Norman doorway of Cxhill church being particularly memorable. Unfortunately, the index, with less than a hundred entries, is pitifully inadequate for a work of this kind, and seriously detracts from its usefulness.

It is a fair question to ask whether a work whose scholarship is so largely superseded merited re-printing in such a lavish form. The specialist will look elsewhere for information on Domesday Book, and other readers will find what Miller has to say on this and allied subjects either dull or misleading. It is rather the information on Miller's own times, and what was then the recent past, that make the book both enjoyable and valuable to the local historian, and to anyone who has been fascinated by that part of Warwickshire which Miller obviously loved so much. The scholar-parson's memories are certainly worth sharing, and we must be grateful to the Roundwood Press for making them available in so attractive a form.

Barrie Trinder.

The activities and publications of some or all of the following bodies should interest readers:

- Arts Council of Banbury (Miss B.G. Rooke, Cornerstones, St. Mary's Road, Adderbury West, Banbury). Minimum 21/-.
- Banbury and District Civic Society (J. Barnden, Hon. Tr., c/o Barclays Bank Ltd., Bridge Street, Banbury). 10/6d.
- Banbury Art Society (Hon. Sec., 24 Bloxham Road, Banbury). 15/-.
- Banbury Geographical Association (B.E. Little, 2 Burlington Crescent, Banbury). 5/-.
- Bicester Local History Circle (Hon. Sec., Miss G.H. Dannatt, Lammass Cottage, Launton Road, Bicester, Oxon.). 5/-.
- Buckinghamshire Record Society (Hon. Sec., J.G. Jenkins, Twitchells End, Jordans, Bucks.). 42/-.
- Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Oxfordshire Branch (Mrs. J. Scott-Cockburn, North Oxon. Sub-Committee Membership Sec., Hornton Hall, Banbury). Minimum 5/-.
- Dugdale Society (published Warwickshire records) (Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon). 42/-.
- Farthinghoe Historical Society (Hon. Sec., R.E.J. Lewis, Abbey Lodge, Farthinghoe, Nr. Brackley, Northants). 5/-.
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