

CAKE AND COCKHORSE



Banbury Historical Society

Spring 1970

2s.6d.

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President:

The Lord Saye and Sele

Chairman:

G.J. Fothergill, M.A. 102 Bath Road, Banbury

Hon. Secretary:

J.S.W. Gibson, F.S.A.,
Humber House,
Bloxham,
Banbury
(Tel: Bloxham 332)

Hon. Asst. Treasurer:

Dr. G.E. Gardam,
11 Denbigh Close,
Broughton Rod,
Banbury
(Tel: Banbury 2841)

Hon. Treasurer:

A.W. Pain, A.L.A.,
c/o Borough Library,
Marlborough Road,
Banbury
(Tel: Banbury 2282)

Hon. Editor "Cake & Cockhorse"

B.S. Trinder, 90 Bretch Hill, Banbury

Hon. Research Adviser

E.R.C. Brinkworth, M.A., F.R. Hist. S.

Hon. Archaeological Adviser

J.H. Fearon, B. Sc.

Committee Members

J.F. Carter, F. Willey, B.A., A. Woodcock, B.A.

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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", "Banbury's Poor in 1850", and "Sanderson Miller of Radway and his work at Wroxton", and a pamphlet "History of Banbury Cross".

The Society also publishes records volumes. These have included "Clockmaking in Oxfordshire, 1400-1850"; "South Newington Churchwardens' Accounts, 1553-1684"; "Banbury Marriage Register, 1558-1837" (3 parts) and "Baptism and Burial Register, 1558-1723" (2 parts); and "A Victorian M.P. and his Constituents: The Correspondence of H.W. Tancred, 1841-1859". "Wigginton Constables' Books, 1691-1836", "Banbury Wills and Inventories, 1591-1650", "Bodicote Churchwardens' Accounts, 1700-1822" and "Banbury Politics, 1830-1880" are all 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 seconder 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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It is with deep regret that we record the tragic death of Keith Bigwood on February 14th 1970 at the age of 40. Keith Bigwood had been a member of the Banbury Historical Society almost since its foundation nearly twelve years ago, and had been a member of the committee since 1960, in which capacity he made many notable contributions to the affairs of the society. His financial expertise was particularly valued by those other committee members, who, whatever the depths of their historical scholarship, found it difficult to make sense of a balance sheet. But more important than his specialist knowledge was the way in which he represented on the committee the opinions of the ordinary member of the society. His opinions of lectures, excursions or editions of this journal were always well considered and always commanded respect. It was Keith Bigwood who first suggested that the Banbury Historical Society should form a church architecture study group. The group's meetings brought delight and pleasure to many members and must have considerably expanded the general consciousness in the local community of the merits of the churches of Banburyshire. Without Keith Bigwood's energy and enthusiasm these meetings would never have taken place.

Keith Bigwood was always ready to help the society in the most humdrum ways, whether by addressing envelopes, ferrying elderly members on excursions, or fetching additional chairs at crowded meetings. The first time we remember meeting him, he was, typically, driving a car-load of members on one of the society's first excursions, to Rousham Park. His death leaves a gap in the society which it will be difficult to fill.

It is impossible here to record Keith Bigwood's other contributions to life in Banbury, either in his professional capacity as a hospital administrator or in the wider sphere of social service, but we can be certain that his loss will be deeply felt by many people in the town far beyond the bounds of the Historical Society.

The Historical Society was represented at Keith Bigwood's funeral by Dr. Gardam and Dr. Brinkworth, and on behalf of all society members we extend our deepest sympathy to his widow and young family.

Our Cover: shows the original proposal by Benjamin Ferrey for Christ Church, South Banbury, which was opened in 1853. The intention to build a spire on top of the tower was never realised. The church was closed in September 1967 and has been demolished during January and February 1970.

SOCIETY NEWS AND ACTIVITIES

Spring and Summer Programme

Tuesday 28th April. At **Wroxton Abbey** (Fairleigh Dickinson University), by kind permission of the Dean. Village Meeting. Illustrated talks on **The Village of Wroxton**, by Dr. E.R.C. Brinkworth and Mr G. Forsyth Lawson. 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday, 19th May. (leave Banbury 6.30 p.m.), Visit to the **Oxford City and County Museum, Fletchers House, Woodstock**, to view recent additions.

Saturday, 13th June. **Annual General Meeting**, at **Broughton Castle**, by kind invitation of the President and Lady Saye and Sele. 5.15–7.00 p.m. (approx.)

Sunday, 28th June. **Cropredy**, 2.30 p.m. (leave Banbury 2.15 p.m.). To view the re-enactment of the **Battle of Cropredy Bridge**, (1944) under Brigadier Peter Young's direction. Brigadier Young will address the Society in October on this battle. Watch local press for details.

Tuesday, 7th July. **Farnborough Hall**. 7.30 p.m. (leave Banbury 7.15 p.m.) by kind permission of Mrs. Holbech.

Wednesday, 22nd July. **Compton Wynyates**. 2.30 p.m. (leave Banbury 2.00 p.m.), by kind permission of the Marquess of Northampton.

As in past years members with room to spare in cars and those wanting transport should meet outside the Cromwell Lodge Hotel, North Bar. The Committee hopes that these excursions will be enjoyable and will attract the same support as in previous years.

Extra-Mural Courses in Archaeology.

The Oxford University Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies is organising the following courses this summer:

April 25–26. **The Origins of the Castle in England**. At **Rewley House, Oxford**. May 16: **The Archaeology of Oxfordshire, past, present and future**. At the **City and County Museum, Woodstock**.

June 5–7. **The Archaeology and Topography of Oxford**. At **Rewley House, Oxford**. July 4–18. **Training School in Field Archaeology**. At **Middleton Stoney, Bicester**. (Residential course). Full details can be obtained from the Secretary, Delegacy for Extra-Mural Studies, **Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford**.

Professor Hoskins

Of major interest to all members is a lecture to be given by Professor W.G. Hoskins on "Some Unsolved Problems in Landscape History" on Friday, 1st May, at 7.30 p.m. in the **Randolph Lecture Room, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford**, tickets 2/6d., obtainable from **Rewley House, Wellington Square, Oxford** (send s.a.e.). Professor Hoskins is Emeritus Professor of Local History from the University of Leicester, and is probably the best known of local historical authors. Members are urged to attend this most important meeting.

Banbury Cheese

Members of the Historical Society who attended the annual dinner in November will recall that it was hoped to serve Banbury Cheese as one of the courses, following the discovery of a recipe for the cheese in the Bodleian Library (*bells, blankets, baskets, and boats*, Oxford City and County Museum, 1965). Unfortunately this proved impossible, since none of the cheesemakers approached was able to produce it. We publish below the recipe for the cheese in the hope that someone may be tempted to try it. "To Break" means to reduce the lumpy curd to an even mass, and a vat, in this sense, means any kind of bowl.

Take a thin cheese vat, and hot milk as it comes from the cow. And run it forth withal in summer time. And knead your curds but once. And knead them not too small, but break them once with your hands. And in summer time salt the curds nothing but let the cheese lie 3 days unsalted. And then salt them. And lay one upon another but not too much salt. And so shall they gather butter. And in winter time in likewise. But then hot your milk. And salt your curds for then it will gather butter of itself. Take the wrung whey of the same milk and let it stand a day or two till it have a cream and it shall make as good butter as any other.

A History of the County of Oxford. Edited by Mary D. Lobel and Alan Crossley. Vol. IX. Bloxham Hundred. (The Victoria History of the Counties of England) Published for the Institute of Historical Research by Oxford University Press. 1969. £7. 7s. 0d.

The publication of the ninth volume of the Victoria History of Oxfordshire which covers the Hundred of Bloxham is a major event in local historical studies. It is to this book that anyone wishing to find out about the history of the villages in the Hundred will turn first. The Victoria Histories are the work of professional historians. They are lavishly produced and very costly. The standards by which they should be judged are therefore high ones. The authors of major standard works of reference have responsibilities which do not fall on those of less ambitious works. Inaccurate information, neglect of important sources, failures to ask the most pertinent questions, faults which might be excused in lesser works, in a volume of this kind are breaches of scholarly responsibility.

The standard formula of the Victoria County Histories, the "systematic way in which the mass of accurate data which it contains is arranged" mentioned on the dust jacket, has not won universal praise among scholars, but it should not be the purpose of a review in a local periodical to criticise the basic formula of the history. This has been done often enough in other journals. The reader of "Cake and Cockhorse" will wish to know how detailed and how accurate are the accounts of the villages which interest him, whether he wishes to carry out research himself or whether he just wishes to satisfy his curiosity.

There is one question about the general organisation of the Victoria History which many people in north Oxfordshire will wish to ask. The unit of the history is the hundred, but in Oxfordshire the hinterland of Banbury which lies within the county is divided between the hundreds of Banbury and Bloxham. By devoting this volume entirely to the latter the editors have made it very difficult to draw conclusions about the history of north Oxfordshire as a whole. Doubtless there are good reasons for the separation of the two hundreds, and it is known that consideration was given to a joint volume. Nevertheless it is difficult to escape the conclusion that a volume covering both Banbury and Bloxham would have been more satisfactory.

The parishes in Bloxham Hundred are Adderbury, including Barford St. John, Bodicote and Milton; Alkerton; Bloxham including Milcombe; Broughton, including North Newington; Drayton; Hanwell; Horley and Hornton; Wigginton; and Wroxton including Balscott. The parish of Shenington is also included in the volume although it was not a part of Bloxham Hundred until 1844 having previously been a detached portion of Gloucestershire.

The hundred contains many buildings which have long interested the historian. For many people the accounts of buildings like Broughton Castle and St. Mary the Virgin Adderbury will be one of the volume's chief attractions. The account of Broughton Castle offers no startling re-interpretation of the history of the building - it is based largely on the publications of St. J. Hope and Avray Tipping, but these works are now very difficult to obtain, and it is useful to have a new summary, particularly since other sources, of which the most notable are the Wyatt MS Notes, are used to give body to the story. The section is illustrated by an excellent block plan of the castle, photographs of the 14th century vaulted passageway and the 16th century chimney piece in the Star Chamber, and a reproduction of Buck's print of the castle in 1729. Anyone wanting to know about the history of the castle can turn to the volume with confidence, and if their curiosity is not satisfied they will find sources to which they can turn for more details. One particularly useful feature of the account is the information about the various tenants of the castle during periods when the Twisleton and Fiennes families were not residing there.

The accounts of most of the churches of the Bloxham Hundred have similar qualities. At Adderbury there is again an excellent plan of the building, and a good reproduction of the Whittock drawing of circa 1830, as well as two close-up photographs of carvings. The text admirably summarises the history of a complex structure, and while there is not room for many details, leads are given which will enable the enthusiast to find out more about bell ringing

customs, silver, the clock of 1684 or the parish registers. Similarly the account of the "very large and handsome" parish church of Bloxham (as Rawlinson called it) is clear and concise, answering as far as possible the major questions about the building of the church, and detailing sources for further investigation, including references to valuable early drawings in the Bodleian Library. As with Adderbury church, there is an admirably clear ground plan, and a drawing by J.C. Buckler of 1802. The account of St. Etheldreda Horley shares most of the merits of those of Adderbury and Bloxham churches, but all the authors can say about the organ, of which the merits are acknowledged in a photograph, is that it was acquired in the late 18th or early 19th century, and that it is said "once to have belonged to Handel". Legends of this sort attach to most old organs, and it is unfortunate that no reputable organ scholar was consulted for an opinion on the date and possible builder of this remarkable instrument. In general the historian of church architecture will find his needs well satisfied in this volume, although from time to time he may be irritated by imprecision and even myth.

The accounts of Anglican church life in the parishes of the Bloxham Hundred vary considerably in quality, though perhaps all rely rather too exclusively on Anglican sources. The account of Adderbury is particularly interesting. In the post-Restoration period many parishioners were divided in their loyalties between Church and Presbyterian meeting. Inadequate attention from incumbents in the 18th century and a long period of non-residence led to a very low level of activity by the 1820s. There were only forty communicants in this populous village in 1823, for six years afterwards the vicar was mad and incapable of performing his duties and no resident curate was appointed. When a new curate eventually went to the village he proved to be a man of great energy. He organised the first major restoration of the parish church, he revived public catechisms on Sundays, he founded a Sunday School and a private lending library, and circulated 180 tracts a week. Alas we are denied knowledge of his name! It is interesting to learn something of the impact of Tractarianism on village church life, as for example at Bloxham after the arrival of James Hodgson in 1852, but very little is said about the villagers' reactions to ritualism. Among Evangelicals in Banbury in the 1850s and 60s Bloxham was regarded with some horror as a centre of neo-Papist innovations. At Wroxton, where Tractarianism was also introduced it seems to have brought about a substantial increase in church attendance. By contrast the volume reveals the strength of Puritan and Evangelical principles at Drayton where there has never been a cross on the Lord's Table, and where the north celebration of communion has always been used. Something is also revealed in the volume of the links between the church and the wider social life of the villages. At Wigginton in the 19th century the clergy tried to reform the villagers' morals by attaching conditions to the holding of allotments. At Shenington the Oddfellows' or Amicable service was first held in the parish church on Trinity Monday 1841 and apparently still continues.

The historian interested in church life in its social setting will find much that is suggestive in this volume, but the treatment of the subject is distinctly uneven. In contrast with the wealth of interesting detail on some parishes, we learn nothing of church life at Tadmerton between 1842 and 1946. If the sources for this parish are exceptionally meagre, then it would have been as well to explain the fact in a footnote, but it would be surprising to find nothing about Tadmerton in Bishop Wilberforce's Diocesan Books, to name only one of a number of possible sources. In their endeavours to provide compact and freely flowing accounts the editors have occasionally been tempted to link facts and opinions in ways which are not always logical. At Barford, we are told that "the restoration of the church in 1849 was a sign of new life". More evidence should surely be quoted before the fact of the subject of the sentence is linked with opinion of the predicate, particularly since we later learn that Samuel Wilberforce found the curate in the 1850s was "cynical and non-resident".

Nonconformity has been an influence of major importance in the social history of north Oxfordshire, but for the most part the account of its development in this volume is disappointing. An exception must be made in the case of the Society of Friends whose manuscript records have been intelligently used, and it is surprising to learn of the relatively large number of Quaker families in the district in the early 18th century even in villages where there was no regular meeting. The accounts of other denominations rely far too much on Anglican documents and on such ephemeral sources as county directories, except in a few cases where scholarly secondary accounts have been published. The editors in general seem too ready to

view Nonconformity from the windows of Cuddesdon Palace, and in particular too credulous of reports by Anglican incumbents that congregations were made up of people from outside their particular parishes. In some cases the neglect of Nonconformist sources means that even the most basic information about congregations is lacking. We learn that no reference was found to Methodism in North Newington after 1820, yet the Local Preachers' Minute Book of the Banbury Wesleyan Circuit shows exactly when services were given up in the village in the 1840s. At Bloxham no evidence whatsoever is offered about the Wesleyan chapel used before the present one was built in 1869. Nowhere is there any mention of the circuits to which particular Methodist congregations belonged, essential information for anyone wanting to trace their history. Most of those in the Bloxham Hundred were linked with the Wesleyan or Primitive Methodist circuits based on Banbury, but the Wigginton Wesleyans were attached to the Chipping Norton circuit. Statistics about Nonconformist membership, except where taken from the 1851 religious census, come largely from Anglican sources, and are probably little more than guesswork. It is unfortunate that in the case of the Methodists the excellent collection of circuit schedules, both Primitive and Wesleyan, in the Banbury Methodist Archives has not been used, for it would have enabled membership figures to be plotted year by year from 1880 onwards, and some figures could have been obtained for earlier periods.

Congregationalist records too would have thrown more light on Nonconformity in the Bloxham Hundred. Relations between Congregationalists in Banbury and those in Adderbury and North Newington were very close in the latter half of the 19th century, and there is much useful material in the records of the Banbury church. For a time the two village congregations were jointly served by a lay evangelist appointed by the Banbury church meeting. At Bodicote there is some discussion of the reasons for the strength of the Baptists in the early 19th century, but no reference to the influence in the village of Richard Austin the Banbury brewer, who was patron of a Baptist church in the town and employed many Baptist workmen. The accounts of Nonconformity do contain much that is useful and interesting, but only a relatively small amount of research on Congregationalist and Methodist documents easily available in Banbury would have enabled the editors to compile much more authoritative accounts.

The accounts of agriculture in the parishes of the Bloxham Hundred throw a great deal of light on the economic development of the district. It seems that in early medieval times most villages employed a two field system of cultivation. In some this was developing into a three field system by the 13th century, but in others two fields survived into the 16th. In most townships the fields were divided into quarters by the late 16th or early 17th century. In some parishes there was a good deal of early enclosure for the purposes of stock farming, but in most, enclosure finally came by Act of Parliament between 1768 and 1805. The maps of fields in Bloxham, Shenington and Wroxton, all re-drawn from 18th century originals, are excellent, but they serve to show how much maps are needed for every parish. Little use seems to have been made of field name maps based on tithe awards for the identification of open fields.

The accounts of enclosures will be of great interest to economic historians. At Adderbury in 1768 enclosure was favoured by the leading landowners because it would facilitate the breeding of sheep and black cattle. It was opposed by small landowners who felt it would tend to "the ruin and destruction of a populous village" and by the vicar who felt that his tithe income would be reduced. At Alkerton, where the arable land was mostly held in large units before enclosure took place in 1777, the effects on agricultural production seem to have been dramatic. Even heath land was ploughed up for cultivation, and Arthur Young quoted the village as one where wheat production had gone up as the result of enclosure. At Drayton the enclosure award was made in 1802, but by that time only 127 acres of the parish were not already enclosed. The editors suggest that the Banbury cloth industry may well have stimulated early enclosure for sheep farming. At Hanwell the parish was enclosed about 1768 when Sir Charles Cope the lord of the manor bought out the common rights of copyholders, life- and lease-holders and of other proprietors. Holdings were consolidated into large farms, and progressive cultivation encouraged. At Wroxton where there was a high proportion of old enclosure, the final enclosure of the open fields in 1804 accelerated the break-up of the old social pattern. Much of the land had been held in small parcels by copyholders, but these holdings were rapidly consolidated during the first half of the 19th century.

Throughout the volume there is a good deal of detailed information about agricultural

techniques. Much of it comes from Arthur Young's "View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire" but intelligent use has been made where possible of manuscript sources such as John Barber's notebook, quoted in the account of Adderbury, and of wills and inventories.

From time to time in the volume there are suggestions about the social history of villages which are of especial interest. Particularly fascinating is the comparison between Broughton and North Newington. In the 19th century these were archetypes of the closed and open village. Broughton, the closed village, was dependent almost entirely on the great house, with 19 out of the 21 cottages owned by Lord Saye and Sele and let at low rents. North Newington had all of the attributes of an open village; over half of the 64 cottages were owner-occupied, a large 17th century house was divided into tenements occupied by labourers, and it had a reputation for independence. The editors trace this contrast back to the late 16th and early 17th century. Between 1589 and 1607 Broughton was largely enclosed by Sir Richard Fiennes, and much of the land in the parish converted to pasture for sheep and cattle. During the same period at North Newington numbers of small tenants were granted leases, and some even obtained the freeholds of their properties. The contrast can be seen in the religious history of the townships. At Broughton the church has always been unchallenged, except by some Quaker families in the 17th century, some of whom were ejected from their cottages by Lord Saye and Sele. At North Newington the Society of Friends enjoyed the support of at least a dozen families in the 17th century. It was there that the influential Quaker Bray D'Oyley of Adderbury was arrested in 1666, and the village provided a meeting place for the Banbury Monthly and Quarterly meetings. At one time there was a Quaker school in the village, and in the 18th century Quaker families were constantly in conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities over the payment of tithes. In the 19th century, while no evidence of Nonconformity has been found in Broughton, Wesleyan and Independent congregations grew up in North Newington, and even in that great age of church building in the Oxford Diocese, no Anglican church was erected there. The contrast between the two villages could with advantage have been pursued more vigorously in the volume, but if the editors have failed to do this, they have at least delineated a problem which will be worthy of more detailed investigation.

Throughout the volume intelligent use is made of inventories from the collection of Oxfordshire wills in the Bodleian library, most of those used dating between the late 16th and the early 18th century. At Adderbury these show an increasing level of comfort in farm houses, and reveal a great variety of farming practices. A most interesting example quoted is that of the Bradford family who rapidly made a very large fortune during the 17th century. Thomas Bradford who died in 1624 had chattels worth £44 while John Bradford who died in 1683 had chattels worth £701. One Samuel French of Broughton who died in 1662 is of particular interest because at the time of his death he held a lease of Banbury Castle and the Castle Orchard. At Wigginton analysis of inventories shows that one family, the Halls, flourished in the parish in the 16th century and continued to live there until the middle of the 19th. Again, it is possible to show by means of the evidence from wills and inventories a steady increase in wealth from generation to generation.

The administration of the Poor Law in the 18th and early 19th centuries is examined in each parish, although the amount of detail obviously must vary according to the number of surviving documents. The innovations tried by the Wigginton overseers, which have been described in an article in this journal by Mr. F.D. Price, are listed, and there is a particularly full account of the administration of relief in Adderbury. At Bloxham the unusual role of the Feoffees in the relief of the poor is described, and it is interesting to see that they rewarded the village poor for not taking part in the Banbury riots in 1830 by distributing twenty fat sheep and eleven tons of coal, and by making more land available for allotments. In most parishes it appears that expenditure on poor relief rose to a very high level during the Napoleonic Wars. It is unfortunate that in their account of Adderbury the editors regard a reduction of expenditure on the poor between 1820 and 1835 as of necessity "an improvement". The recent work of Dr. Hobsbawm and Dr. Rude has emphasised that this was a period when poor law authorities were striving hard to reduce expenditure, and in consequence were treating the poor with increasing severity. Unless there is evidence that the number of paupers had decreased in the period concerned, it is more likely that a reduction in expenditure was "an improvement" only for the ratepayers. For the paupers it would have meant increased starvation and misery.

Throughout this volume very little attention is paid to the farm labourers, who in modern times have comprised the majority of the inhabitants of the Bloxham Hundred. Some account of housing conditions based on the 1851 census and 19th century government reports would surely have been possible, and would have involved no more research than the valuable analyses of yeomen's wills of earlier periods. In the accounts of village charities nothing is said of the way in which labourers strove to control them in the late 19th century, which has been so well described in M.K. Ashby's "Joseph Ashby of Tysoe". Allotments, another subject to which Joseph Ashby devoted much attention, are rather better treated, though it would have been helpful if the subject had been given an index entry. The Victoria History also fails to say anything significant about the Agricultural Labourers' Union of the 1870s which received considerable support in the villages of the Bloxham Hundred. We learn only that at Alkerton the union was blamed in 1878 for the small number of communicants at the parish church. In the same year "Unionists" were holding meetings on the village green at Hanwell, but the account of the parish suggests that they were members of a Nonconformist sect!

Vernacular architecture in the Bloxham Hundred is generally well treated, although, as was to be expected, the accounts rely heavily on Dr. Wood-Jones's "Traditional Domestic Architecture in the Banbury Region". A little more precision would be helpful on occasions. At Adderbury we are told that "a high proportion of houses and cottages date from the prosperous period of the 16th and 17th centuries and many from the 18th century". It would be better to know just what percentage a high proportion implies. It would also help the serious student of the subject if houses were identified more closely.

The treatment of railways in the area is somewhat inconsistent. Two different dates are given for the construction of the Banbury and Cheltenham Direct Railway. Certainly the line was opened in 1887, but surely construction did not begin in 1855. The editors have been unable to discover the opening date of the mineral line from Banbury to the ironstone quarries at Wroxton, although they show that it was under construction in 1880. They certainly err in suggesting that it was a branch of the Great Western Railway. The account of quarrying at Wroxton is in general imprecise. A more definite date for the commencement of large-scale exploitation of ironstone than "at the end of the 19th century" is certainly required in a work of this standard.

The quarter century since the peace of 1945 has probably seen more profound social changes in the villages of the Bloxham Hundred than at any time since enclosure. The growth of motor transport has transformed many of the villages into commuter settlements. Concrete casting and other industries have grown up in a number of villages. Most houses are now connected to mains water and electricity supplies. The account of this most recent period is all too brief - we are told for example only of the existence of Modern Conveyors Ltd. of Adderbury, and are unable to learn what the firm produces or how many men they employ. The dates when electricity and mains water were brought to the villages are not disclosed, yet these surely were innovations which made a considerable impact on the lives of the villagers. It is unfortunate that the social survey "Country Planning" which gives a remarkably full picture of the district as it was at the end of the Second World War has not been used, nor is there any reference to that unique local historical document, the film "Twenty Four Square Miles".

A volume of the Victoria County History is a work of reference and is not designed to be read from cover to cover at one sitting. Readers who come to it will have many different needs, and it is absurd to attempt to make a quick judgement on the volume. Certainly most people will find that it answers their needs perfectly. A parish historian will discover that by sorting out the intricacies of manorial descent the editors have saved him much drudgery, and on most aspects of village history he will find references to the principal sources available. The visitor to Wroxton Abbey or Horley Church will find most of his questions answered here. The historian of the poor law, of enclosures or of medieval field patterns will find here an overall picture of the district which will point the way to the most promising subjects for study. Even the browser will not come to the volume in vain. Some of the portraits of village worthies have been particularly well written - that of Thomas Lyddiat, vicar of Alkerton, for example. Nevertheless the volume does from time to time fail to meet the high standards claimed for it on the dust jacket. Some aspects of village history have not been investigated as exhaustively as they could have been. Nonconformist history written from Anglican sources is not to be

recommended. At other points the reader may well be irritated by the lack of precision with regard to dates or the identity of people or buildings. In general the volume is likely to fulfil its most important task - that of acting as a foundation for many years of further research. It is a starting point to a better understanding of local history and not a final solution.

B.S.T.

General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire. A Reprint of the Work Drawn up for the Consideration of the Board of Agriculture and Internal Improvement (1813) by Arthur Young. David and Charles Reprints. 1969. £5.5s.

The County Reports to the Board of Agriculture are among the most useful sources of early 19th century local history. The Shropshire volume, for example, contains detailed information about canals and the iron industry in the county unobtainable elsewhere, as well as much interesting material on agriculture. This volume will be of interest chiefly to those concerned with the agrarian history of Oxfordshire, although information on such matters as wages rates and the prices of provisions will be of wider concern. Oxfordshire was fortunate that its agriculture was surveyed by Arthur Young, Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, for Young's writing adds distinction to the duller subject matter. "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", he begins Chapter XV. The reader will find many references to the more enlightened farmers of Banburyshire, to John Wilson of Adderbury, to Mr. Warrener of Bloxham, to James and Thomas Payne of Drayton. The section on transport is of little interest, far inferior to that in some other county volumes, and there is no reference to the Thames Navigation. The section on industry is confined to the Witney blanket and Woodstock glove trades. Such omissions are not the fault of the publishers. They could, however, have added to the usefulness of the book by including an index of names and places. This is nevertheless an important source book which has been virtually unobtainable for many years, and local historians should welcome its re-appearance.

B.S.T.

Oxoniensia. Vol. XXXIII. 1968. Oxford Architectural & Historical Society, 1969. Price to non-members £2. 12. 6d.

The latest issue of "Oxoniensia" includes no articles of direct relevance to the Banbury area, but members of the Historical Society will find much in it to interest them. Mr. R.H.C. Davis contributes a fascinating and scholarly appraisal of the Oxford charter of 1191, there is a description of a medieval cistern from Churchill, the largest medieval pot ever found in the Oxford region, which was probably used for brewing, and Mrs. P.R.L. Horn has written an account of Christopher Holloway, one of the leaders of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union in Oxfordshire. A survey of Crucks in the West Berkshire and Oxford Region by John Fletcher will interest anyone concerned with vernacular architecture, and Mavis Batey's account of the transplanting of the village of Nuneham Courtenay in 1761 identifies it with the village described by Oliver Goldsmith. All of these articles are of a high standard, but of particular importance in a Banbury awaiting re-development is the account of Bicester Priory based on observations made during building work by a schoolboy.

B.S.T.

BANBURY WIDOWS' SOCIETY

When the first nationally organised agricultural trade union, the National Agricultural Labourers' Union was established at Leamington on 29th May, 1872, it aroused the interest and support of farm workers in many counties. Amongst those so attracted were labourers in North Oxfordshire. During the following months they formed themselves into a separate district of the N.A.L.U. - the Banbury district - which was one of the thirty-four or so areas into which the Union was divided at that time.

Initially the movement had some local success, and by December, 1874, the Banbury district could record a membership of 2,599, divided among about seventy branches in North Oxfordshire, and in villages just over the county borders in Northamptonshire and South Warwickshire. This figure proved to be the peak. As opposition among farmers strengthened, as arable agriculture faced grave difficulties from the growing imports of cheap American wheat and from bad harvests at home, so the Union's position was eroded. By March, 1878, Banbury district could muster only 1,200 members. The secretary admitted that the district's "income from branches (was) smaller . . . than it was last year. One great cause of this (was) that during the winter months many . . . members (had) been out of employment, and (had) not been able to keep their contributions up; . . ."¹ It was claimed that 800 of the 1,200 members had also suffered some wage reduction during the course of the previous year.

In an effort to attract new members and to retain existing ones, district committees of the N.A.L.U. up and down the country began to press for the introduction of friendly society benefits, to help members during sickness or old-age. One of the friendly society schemes then produced was the Widows' Society.

The Widows' Society movement seems to have started in East Anglia. It spread from there to the Midlands, the first district in the Midland counties to become involved being Northampton. This district set up its own Widows' Society in November, 1877.² Shortly afterwards, on 2nd February, 1878, a letter was published in the English Labourers' Chronicle - the organ of the N.A.L.U. - from a unionist's wife in Great Barford, near Banbury. In this the writer called for the establishment of a Widows' Society in the Banbury district, declaring: "It is a noble work. Now members' wives be ready to make a start at Great Barford branch. . . . I don't see why the men should have all their own way, and leave us to be taken to the union workhouse. . . . Now you non-union men, you must come and take part in the Union, or your wives will have no chance. . . ." (The letter was signed with the initials A.P. only, so an exact identification of the correspondent has not been possible.)

This letter underlined the two basic reasons for the creation of Widows' Societies. From the Union's point of view, they encouraged membership, since only the wives of unionists were entitled to belong, and from the wives' point of view, there was the desire for security in old-age, should their husband predecease them. By the guaranteeing of a small weekly income - the Banbury Widows' Society proposed 4s. a week - widows would be free from the fear of reliance upon the tender mercies of poor law relief during their last years.

Despite the early appearance of this appeal, it was not until the national conference of the N.A.L.U. was held in the following May that any further steps were taken. On this occasion, the Banbury district submitted a resolution, "That a National Society be established for members' wives." This was rejected by the delegates, and it was decided to leave the formation of any Widows' Societies in the hands of the individual districts.³

It was in these circumstances that the then Banbury district secretary, Thomas Boulton, and his committee decided to set up their own purely local organisation. The Society was eventually established in October, 1878, and the rules were published quite soon afterwards. As can be seen in the Appendix, they were extremely rough and ready. Like all of the N.A.L.U. friendly societies, they were based on no firm actuarial principles. The wives of men of all ages were admitted on an equal footing, each paying an entrance fee of 6d., a weekly contribution of 2d., and 3d quarterly towards the funeral benefit of £4. The only restrictions were that the husband should be a unionist and should be "in his usual health . . ." Of course, the dangers of the

situation are clear; if a predominance of elder members occurred, then the solvency of the society would very soon be threatened, for obviously such members were more likely to qualify for benefit.

Perhaps the Banbury women themselves realised the essential insecurity of the scheme, perhaps they were disillusioned by the internal bickering which characterised the N.A.L.U. leadership at this time, or perhaps they could not spare even the modest 2d. per week required for membership. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that the Banbury Widows' Society never 'caught on'. Branches were established in some of the villages - for example, Sibford, Hook Norton,⁴ Middle Barton and, of course, Great Barford itself - but when the Banbury district committee met at the beginning of January, 1879, it was noted that only "between thirty and forty women" had joined the Society in the previous quarter. Boulton, in remarking upon this position, also played upon the women's latent fears: "I should like to see every woman in the district in the society, so that you may keep each other from the union workhouse . . ." ⁵

At Duns Tew, shortly afterwards, another branch was formed, but with six members only. At the meeting then held other women were strongly urged to join and to avoid the disgrace of a pauper's funeral. One speaker dramatically declared that it had been known for paupers to be "stripped naked when put in their coffin and only a heap of saw-dust for their pillow". Whatever the effect of this blood-curdling statement on the women of Duns Tew, it did not arouse enthusiasm in the North Oxfordshire area as a whole!

Increasingly, the women seem to have realised that the Union movement was of little benefit to them. They suspected that its only purpose was to make "ol' Joey Arch a gennelman".⁶ In some villages they certainly prevented the men from joining the Union - as for example, at Chilson and Cropredy. Women in these villages were described rather bitterly by Thomas Boulton as "not only 'home rulers', but 'men rulers' ".⁷

Although the Banbury district secretary was able to invest £10 from the Widows' Society funds in the Post Office Savings Bank during both May and October, 1880, its failure to attract more members made the movement's ultimate demise inevitable.

Eventually, in June 1882, it was decided to wind the whole thing up. It was announced in the Union newspaper on 24th June, that "seeing the Widows' Society is not likely to continue very much longer the committee have decided that payments into the same shall be discontinued after the end of the present month. Members becoming chargeable on the funds will be entitled to the full pay as long as there is any money in hand to pay with." In this unsatisfactory fashion, yet another of the Union's schemes was brought to an end. It is perhaps significant that at this stage the national membership of the N.A.L.U. stood at a mere 15,000, as compared with a level of over 86,000 claimed at the beginning of June, 1874. Banbury's own membership figures are not available, but they were certainly below 1,000. Agricultural trade unionism for all effective purposes had disappeared from North Oxfordshire for the remainder of the nineteenth century.⁸

Pamela Horn

APPENDIX

RULES OF THE WIDOWS' SOCIETY OF THE BANBURY DISTRICT OF THE N.A.L.U.⁹ (Established October, 1878)

1. **Constitution.** That this Society shall be called the Banbury District Widows' Society, and its object shall be to assist and relieve the Widows of deceased Members, in connection with the National Agricultural Labourers' Union.

2. **Appointment of Officers.** That this Society shall be governed by a committee of management, which shall consist of the following Officers:- President, Secretary, Treasurer, two Auditors, and three Trustees. The Officers shall be appointed yearly, except the Trustees, who shall remain in office during the pleasure of the Society; Trustees dying or being removed from office, another or others shall be elected in their stead at a general meeting of the Society.

3. The yearly meeting of this Society shall be held at the same place, and about the same time as the annual meeting of the District.

4. **Branches.** That branches of this Society may be established in any place connected with the National Agricultural Labourers' Union. That a Collector be appointed in each branch, whose duty shall be to receive contributions and forward the same to the District Secretary every three months, and shall receive for services rendered such sum as may be agreed upon at the annual meeting.

5. **Members.** That the Members shall be Wives of the Members of the N.A.L.U. Society, who shall have been Members not less than three months.

6. **Payment by Members.** That each member shall pay an entrance fee of sixpence, and twopence per week as contributions payable monthly, and no Member shall be entitled to any relief from the funds of the Society until they have paid the entrance fee of Sixpence and the weekly contributions for twelve months. But if at any time the contributions be found insufficient to secure the benefits subscribed for, the Officers of the Society shall have power to levy such a sum per Member as shall meet the expenditure.

7. **Relief to Members.** That the relief to Members shall be four shillings per week, so long as the Member may live and remain the Widow, but if the Member change her situation by marrying again, or misconduct herself in any way contrary to decency and respect, viz.:- by living in adultery, &c., whilst being a Widow, all allowance from the Society's funds will at once cease to be paid to such Member; the case to be decided by a majority of its Members, at a meeting specially called for that purpose.

8. **Admission of Members.** That no person will be admitted a Member of this Society, whose Husband is labouring under any disease and under medical treatment at the time of application; but any person may join the Society at any time, whose Husband is in his usual health, and not under medical treatment and a Member of the N.A.L.U. Society, by payment of the entrance fee and contributions, as per Rule 6.

9. **Imposition.** That should it be proved any person or persons are by any means scheming to become Members of this Society by taking any undue advantage of any person, or persons, or of the Society, by marrying a man who is labouring under any disease likely to cause the death of any man, or men so as to become a burden to the Society through such scheming or undue advantage, such person or persons shall not be deemed a fit and proper person to become a Member of this Society, or if already a Member such person or Member, on the case being proved by a majority of Members at a meeting called for that purpose, shall be expelled from the Society.

10. **Application for Relief.** That any member applying for relief on the death of her Husband shall produce a certificate certifying the death of such Member's Husband, signed by the Medical Doctor attending such man, previous to, and at the time of such Member's Husband's death.

11. **Disposal of Funds.** That all monies (sic) above £5 in the Treasurer's hands not wanted for immediate use, shall be put in the Post Office or other Bank for security, in the names of the Trustees chosen by the Society, who shall be held responsible for all monies (sic) received by them on account of the Society, and shall give an account to the Society every six months of its financial position.

12. **Duties of Officers.** The Secretary appointed, shall keep the books of the Society, and record all contributions and disbursements of the Society in conjunction with the Treasurer. The committee of management shall attend to all duties for the benefit of the Society.

13. **Auditing the Accounts.** That two Auditors shall be appointed to examine all accounts of the Society in conjunction with the Secretary and Treasurer, and shall lay before the Society a true account of its financial position every six months.

14. **Undue Advantage by Boards of Guardian.** That should it be known at any time that Boards of Guardians are taking undue advantage of the Society and its Widow Members by withholding allowance to the children of such Members, the case shall be laid before the Executive of the N.A.L.U. at Leamington, with an application for their advice and assistance to have the case tried in a Court of Law.

15. **Arrears of Members.** That any Member being over three months in arrears shall be fined threepence, and if six months in arrears be excluded.

16. **Any case not Provided for.** That should any case come under the notice of any Member of the Society likely to injure the reputation of this Society, wherein the Society's Rules are silent and the case not provided for, the District Committee, in conjunction with six Members who shall be elected at the Annual Meeting as an arbitration committee, shall be summoned as early as possible, and any decision awarded by such Meeting shall be binding on all parties.

17. **Burial Fund.** That each Member shall contribute one shilling per year towards this fund, to be paid by regular quarterly instalments of threepence each Member per quarter.

18. **Allowance on the Death of Members.** That on the death of any Widow, being a Member of this Society, a sum of four pounds shall be paid for funeral expenses, and if the threepence per quarter will not meet such expense, a levy shall be made on the Members to make up the deficiency.

19. **Revision of Rules.** That these Rules may be rescinded, modified, or altered, for the benefit and consolidation of the Society at any Annual Meeting; but any award given as per Rule 16, shall stand as a Rule until such alteration at the Annual Meeting shall take place.

20. **Election of Officers.** The Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Committee of management to be elected at each Annual Meeting.

THOMAS BOULTON,
5, Castle Street, West,
Banbury,
District Secretary.

REFERENCES

1. *English Labourers' Chronicle* - 23rd March 1878.
2. See my article 'Nineteenth Century Naseby Farm Workers' in *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, Vol.IV, No. 3, 1968/69, pp. 170-171.
3. *English Labourers' Chronicle* - 8th June, 1878.
4. In October, 1879, following the death of her husband, one of the Hook Norton members became eligible for her 4s. benefit. She would seem to have been the first in the district, and her example was quoted to encourage others to join. - *English Labourers' Chronicle* - 18th October and 29th November, 1879.
5. *English Labourers' Chronicle* - 11th January, 1879.
6. C. Holdenby - *Folk of the Furrow* (1913), p. 152. Joseph Arch was, of course, the N.A.L.U. President.
7. *English Labourers' Chronicle* - 20th March, 1880.
8. Some ordinary N.A.L.U. branches remained in existence in North Oxfordshire until at least 1889; the *English Labourers' Chronicle* of 22nd June, 1889, recorded the existence of eight branches in the Banbury area, including one at Middle Barton, at Deddington, at Evenley and at Great Tew. Again, in the summer and autumn of 1891 an urban union - the National Labour Federation - carried out a small recruitment campaign in the Banbury area, but without any permanent success. Branches were said to have been established at Bodicote, Bloxham, King's Sutton, Deddington and Hanwell. - *Workmen's Times* - 21st August and 23rd October, 1891.
9. The Rule Book is in the Bodleian Library - G.A. Oxon. 8 1255(7). So far as is known, it is a unique survival of the numerous Widows' Society Rule Books which must once have existed in various parts of the country.

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

- Arts Council of Banbury (Miss Rosemary Hall, Flat 33, 20 Calthorpe Road, Banbury).
Minimum 21/-.
- Banbury Art Society (Hon. Sec., R. Edgson, Print's Cottage, Bloxham, Banbury) 20/-.
- Banbury Geographical Association (B.E. Little, 2 Burlington Gardens, Banbury) 10/6d.
- Bicester Local History Circle (Hon. Sec., Miss G.H. Dannatt, Lammas Cottage, Launton Road,
Bicester, Oxon.). 10/-.
- Buckinghamshire Record Society (Hon. Sec., E.J. Davis, County Record Office, New Council
Offices, Walton Street, Aylesbury, Bucks.). 42/-.
- Council for the Preservation of Rural England, Oxfordshire Branch (Mrs. E. Turner, Woodside,
Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon.). Minimum 10/-.
- Dugdale Society (publishes Warwickshire records) (Shakespeare's Birthplace, Stratford-upon-
Avon). 42/-.
- Heraldry Society (59 Gordon Square, London, W.C.1.). 30/-; or to include "The Coat of
Arms", 50/-.
- Historical Association (59a Kennington Park Road, London, S.E.11.) (Oxford Branch: A.J.P.
Puddephatt, 93, Old Road, Headington, Oxford). 20/-; or to include "History", 35/-.
- Northamptonshire Record Society (Delapré Abbey, Northampton). 42/-.
- Oxford Architectural and Historical Society (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford). 15/- or to include
"Oxoniensia", 42/-.
- Oxford Preservation Trust (The Painted Room, 3 Cornmarket Street, Oxford). Minimum 5/-.
- Oxfordshire Record Society (Dr. W.O. Hassall, Hon. Sec., Bodleian Library, Oxford). 40/-.
- Shipston-on-Stour and District Local History Society (H.G. Parry, Hon. Sec., 8 Stratford Road,
Shipston-on-Stour, Warw.) 7/6d.
- Warwickshire Local History Society (47 Newbold Terrace, Leamington Spa.) 10/-d.
- Woodford Halse Historical Society (J.W. Anscomb, 7 Manor Road, Woodford Halse, Rugby,
Warw.) 5/-.

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