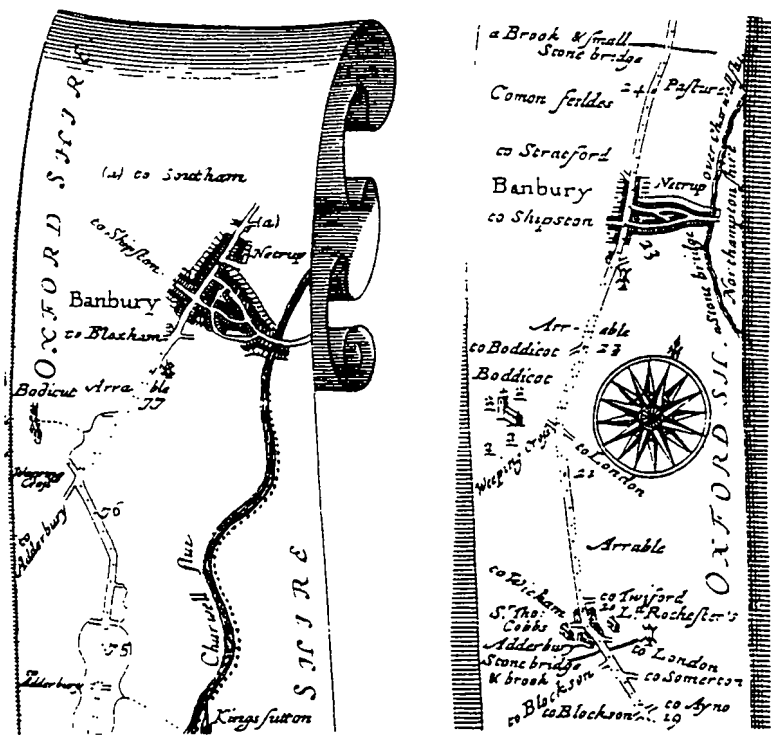


CAKE AND COCKHORSE



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**Details of the Society's activities and
publications will be found inside the back cover.**

Cake and Cockhorse

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

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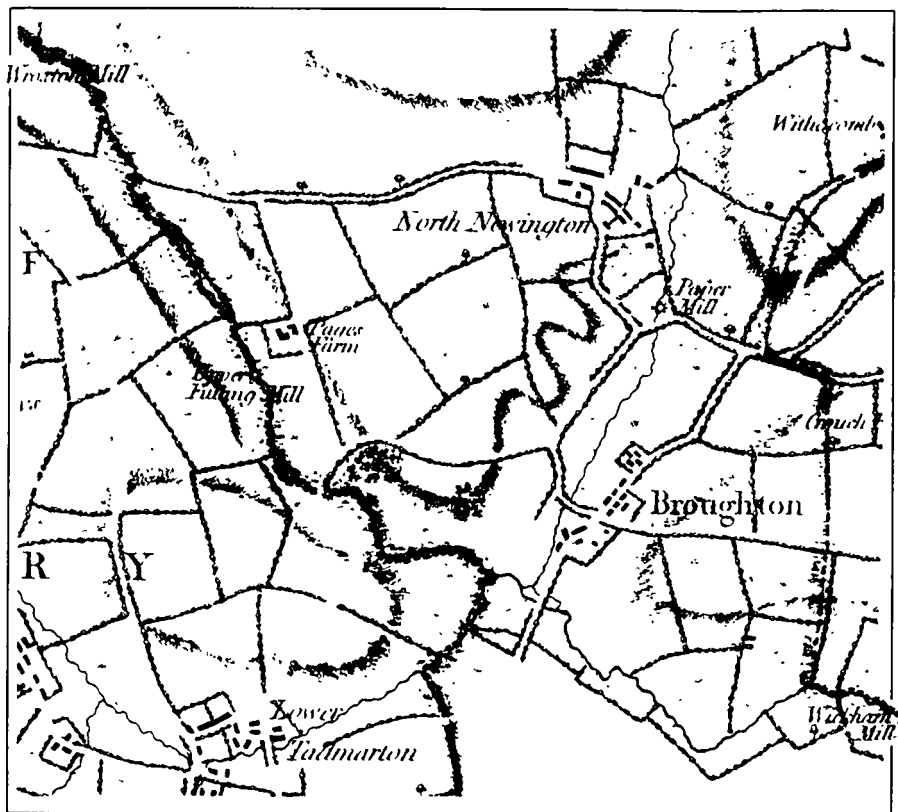
We are fortunate, over the years, in having had many articles from scholarly academics. These we always welcome, but just as eagerly we look for contributors whose knowledge comes from having *lived* in ‘Banburyshire’ much of their lives. In this issue we have five such, whilst the subject of our major article, ‘Old Mettle’, is a rare example of what today might be called an ‘under-achiever’, who, nevertheless, is still remembered almost two centuries later. The local credentials of Margaret Taylor, Kevin Wyles, Nan Clifton and Andrew Fox will be obvious. Pamela Keegan, Cropredy historian, has alas moved away to south Wales – and apologised for some initial confusion in her review because she is suffering from illness caused by fumes from ‘compulsory sheep dipping’!

Vivien Billington’s article on woad (in our last issue) has aroused considerable interest, as evidenced by Nan Clifton’s piece. The newly published *Northamptonshire Past and Present* (N.R.S., 53, 2000, £3.00), has her longer article on ‘Woad-Growing in Northamptonshire’. It also has Jack Gould’s ‘The Culworth Gang’, with gratifying acknowledgment of one of its main sources, the article by James Beesley written for the manuscript *Magazine of the Banbury Mechanics’ Institute* (1837-8), first printed in *C&CH* 3.1 (September 1965).

The talk on Oxfordshire Maps has encouraged us to include three in this issue.

Once again, our thanks to the staff of Banbury Museum, in particular Christine Kelly, for the welcome and work put into our Reception on 7th September.

Cover: Ogilby’s Roads through Banbury, 1695.



Broughton parish in 1793/4, from the map by Richard Davis. Hazelford Mill was also known as Upper Fulling Mill, as it is shown here. The ford over the Sor Brook occurs as *Haeslford* in a charter as early as 956 (*V.C.H. Oxon. 9, Bloxham Hundred*, pp. 85, 95-96). The present Broughton Grounds Farm appears as 'Pages Farm' on this map.

HAZELFORD – A DESERTED VILLAGE

Margaret Taylor

Near the farm where I live, Broughton Grounds Farm, lie the ruins of the old village of Hazelford. My late father-in-law said that the last inhabitants of Hazelford moved out about the same year his father became tenant of the farm – 1914. Lying west of Broughton and North Newington, it was a very small village – more of a hamlet – situated in a valley on the millstream, and surrounded by trees. All that is left now are two stone walls of a house, partly covered in ivy, but you can see the mounds of grass-covered stone where three other houses and the Mill once stood, and you can trace a garden wall. In the south-east corner of the village are the remains of a large brick-lined pool. This may have been the water supply for the village or a pool for dyeing cloth. There are fruit trees, and until a few years ago you could still find some rhubarb. Cattle graze the village (and the rhubarb!) in the summer, so it's not too overgrown. It is still very peaceful and tranquil – all you can hear is the sound of the waterfall. There is no road access to the village – the track from the road was ploughed up by my husband's grandfather in the 1920s, but you can still see the contour of the path going up the hill. So Hazelford has remained undisturbed for nearly a century.

Earliest records show that in 1444 a man called Thomas Hazelford rented the village together with an acre of land from the Fiennes family at Broughton Castle, for 13s.4d. as part of a knight's fee. At that time it was a corn mill. Not much else is known, but by 1792 it had been converted to a paper mill and leased to a man called George King. In 1841 the Mill was leased to William Sellers, but by 1861 the Sellers family had moved to the North Newington paper-mill. Shortly after 1850, Hazelford paper-mill closed down, and the people who lived there found work elsewhere. It is interesting to note that a man called George Morby lived at Hazelford – for he was a dyer. Perhaps the pool was used for dyeing cloth – a very popular industry in the later 1800s with the Fulling Mill and Dye Works less than half a mile away downstream. However, the population of Hazelford decreased and by 1891 only ten people – two families – lived there.

The story is told that a fire nearly destroyed the village, but this cannot be proved. Apparently, the fire brigade was called, but by the time they

arrived the fire was well under way. However, one local man, the late Ken Riley, told me that one of the houses – the only brick house in the village – was charred black from smoke. Some of the bricks from that house were later taken by my husband's grandfather and used to line the floors of some of the barns at Broughton Grounds Farm. So, in some small way, Hazelford lives on!

Another local man, the late Lanc Mollington, worked for my husband's grandfather, and actually ploughed up the track from the road to the village. He recalled how difficult it was, but, for me, his most priceless memory was that the walls of the stone house still partly standing had 'blue wallpaper with flowers on it!'

A local farmer, the late Harry Whitmill, remembers the Mill working during the early 1900s – I wonder what it was used for? But during the First World War the Mill was blown up and the metal used for munition supplies. My late father-in-law, as a young boy, had a day off school to watch it!

Hazelford is in the parish of Broughton, and there are records of some of the people being baptised and buried at Broughton church. Harry Whitmill remembered children from Hazelford attending North Newington School (a mile and a half away, across fields). Stories live on of village fights between lads of Tadmarton and Broughton who met at Hazelford, until one was accidentally killed; another of a man losing his thumb in the wheel of the Mill. Tales like these, passed down by generations, help to bring a place alive, but it is important to remember the hardships a small, remote community like Hazelford had to endure.

I have often stood in Hazelford and tried to imagine what it was like all those years ago. I have often said, 'If only I could find someone whose family lived here!' By far the most established family were the Coolings, who lived there for fifty years. Edward came from North Newington, and Lucy (née Adams) came from Marston St Lawrence. They had six children before Edward's death in 1868 at the age of 42. Lucy lived on at Hazelford with her family until her death, aged 82, in 1903. They are buried in Broughton churchyard. I have recently discovered that their eldest daughter, Eliza (born 1857), went to America in 1890 to marry George Hunt, from Long Compton. Eliza died in 1901, but her grand-daughter, Cleo Hunt Ossenkop, and her great-grand-daughter Gayle Faubion, live in Brier, Washington, U.S.A.

So in another small way, Hazelford still lives on and I feel privileged to help Gayle trace her family history.

**“A VERY CELEBRATED BANBURY CHARACTER”
RECONSTRUCTING WORKING CLASS BIOGRAPHY:
THE CASE OF WILLIAM ‘OLD METTLE’ CASTLE**

Keith Chandler

Introduction

One truism of research is that individual members of the working class rarely leave much of a mark on the pages of history; and the further back in time, the less possible it becomes to flesh out such lives. A small number left behind diaries or, more rarely, autobiographies, some of which have survived into the modern era. For the past four hundred years most, though by no means all, were registered at the date of baptism, marriage, baptisms of children, and burial. And, since 1841, the vast majority have been chronicled in the decadal censuses. Such entries in civil and ecclesiastical records freeze a few moments in time and space for posterity, but the *minutiae* of day-to-day existence remain largely undocumented.

Once in a while, however, a working man leads such an unusual and colourful life that he features in a great number of contemporary and posthumous sources. One such life – that of William ‘Old Mettle’ Castle – is placed under scrutiny in this piece. The situation offers a rare opportunity for the historian to allow the primary sources (given here verbatim, retaining original spelling and punctuation) to convey their own story in a reasonably coherent manner, with merely a minimum degree of commentary and interpretation.

As it happens, our subject leaves fewer impressions than most in those official sources which are the lifeblood of the historian. He died mere days before the taking of the first detailed nationwide census; left no trace of personal schooling or religious conviction (if such existed); apparently never married or produced children; as a non-householder had no right to vote, even after electoral reform; and left no will. Yet from the less conventional (and more vibrant) evidence which survives, many revealing insights into the social, criminal, political and cultural life of a north Oxfordshire market town during the first half of the nineteenth century, as reflected in the experiences of one inhabitant, are laid bare.

There is certainly a suggestion that he may have worked the canal barges before the accident which crippled him;¹ although elsewhere the accident is said to have occurred in 'early childhood',² which would make such employment unlikely, or at the very least limited. And one source speaks of him being at 'a considerable distance' from Banbury,³ and another, ambiguously, in a 'distant part of the county on a boating expedition or something of the kind',⁴ both referring to the year 1818 or later. But, while allowing for the obvious paucity and bias of sources, from the locations named we may observe that Castle's life was played out almost entirely within a few miles of Banbury itself.

He resided variously in the village of his birth, Adderbury (three miles to the south), from 1793 to probably 1799 and beyond, presumably in a cottage; on an 'old boat' moored at Neithrop (north and west of Banbury borough), around 1830, and Grimsbury (over the Cherwell to the east), in 1841. He was also said to have slept at times in lodging houses, barns and 'hovels'.⁵ He was active in the role of fool to morris dance sets based at Adderbury, Bloxham (also three miles to the south) and Kings Sutton (four miles south-east). In that capacity he would have travelled with the dancers to various villages – almost certainly including Souldern (seven miles south-east) – for the club feasts and other festivities, but all this would have occurred probably within, say, ten miles of Banbury. Castle's known criminal activities extended as far as Shutford (four miles west), and as a result he made his longest recorded journeys, on two occasions (in 1830 and 1831), to Oxford gaol and assizes, a distance of some twenty-three or four miles. Other than Grimsbury and Shutford (this latter on the same parallel), all of these locations lie to the south of Banbury, and no firm evidence survives to indicate that Castle ever travelled further northwards (see fn. 19).

At this remove it is almost impossible to imagine the physical context of existence prior to 1841, especially in what was essentially an insular and parochial community, albeit one on the threshold of drastic social

¹ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 18 March 1820, 3 .

² *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

³ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text. See also E.T. Clark, 'The Banbury "Fool" who got named in its history', *Cake & Cockhorse*, 10 1 (Autumn 1985), pp 10-11.

⁴ As fn. 2.

⁵ Janet Heatley Blunt MSS., Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, London Volume XIX, letter to Cecil Sharp, 1 May 1922.

transition. Christiana S. Cheney, in the Introduction to *Shoemaker's Window*,⁶ written in 1948, gives some flavour of the period:

Herbert shows us Banbury before the Reform Bill, Banbury before the railway came to it, Banbury unpaved and unlighted, its streets encumbered with piles of timber and other odorous obstacles and bisected in some places by channels of filthy water across which foot-passengers made their way on stepping-stones. But because of these features we must not suppose that life was stagnant in the little town. The borough with its adjacent hamlets contained between five and six thousand inhabitants when George Herbert was born [1814], and the population was steadily growing. Even if the North family interest usually determined the votes of the eighteen or so electors to Banbury's parliamentary seat, elections were occasionally contested and excited popular interest, even disorder. Although no railway touched Banbury until 1850, there was an impressive timetable of regular coaches and wagons which maintained contact with the larger towns of the West Midlands and with London. Already in 1825 a scheme was set on foot for paving and lighting the streets and Herbert has a good deal to tell of the execution of this work.

Although the following primary sources contain a degree of repetition, each represents the state of knowledge of that particular author: some from personal observation, even first-hand interaction with Castle himself, and some from the oral tradition. By conflating multiple accounts it is often possible to arrive at an apparently more accurate historical reality. Each piece additionally reflects the prejudices and perceptions of the commentator. Some are sympathetic towards Castle's unconventional lifestyle, others are condemnatory. A very few, including George Herbert, saw through the lunatic image Castle fostered around himself, to the native intelligence and guile beneath.

In the following biography, those clarifying and contextualising primary sources which do not mention Castle by name (excepting those which unambiguously refer to him anyway) are italicised; with further commentary by the present author additionally in square brackets. Bibliographic details of the most important primary sources are shown in footnotes.

⁶ George Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window Recollections of a Midland Town before the Railway Age*, ed. Christiana S. Cheney, pp. xi-xii (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949; 2nd edn. ed. B.S. Trinder, B.H.S 10, 1971; reprinted as 3rd edn., Gulliver Press, Banbury, 1979). Herbert's original handwritten manuscript consists of 190 foolscap pages, written as a series of letters to friends circa 1898 to 1900. He died 21 December 1902.

A Life

Wednesday, 30 January 1793

The real name of this eccentric person was William Castle: he was of an Adderbury family, and born about the year 1789.⁷

[William Castle was baptised at Adderbury on Wednesday, 30 January 1793, the son of John and Ann Castle. It was frequently the case that baptism occurred two or three weeks after birth, although longer and shorter periods are recorded. William Castle was therefore probably born in early January. At the date of their marriage on Saturday, 3 November 1792 John was aged 22, a weaver living in Adderbury West, and Ann (née Gunn), aged 29 and living in Adderbury East (the village straddles the main Oxford Road). It is a well documented fact that, during this period, individuals often did not know their exact age and date of birth; and also that the older one gets the greater the likelihood of mentally adding extra years. The disparity of the year of birth given in the 1841 source quoted above (1789) and the more likely 1793, clearly stems from the general belief that Castle was '52 or 53' at the time of death.]⁸

Tuesday, 10 September 1799

[The burial of John Castle, presumably William's father (although generally before 1813 ages at the time of death were seldom entered in burial registers, so identification cannot be confirmed beyond any doubt) is recorded at Adderbury on Tuesday, 10 September 1799.⁹ Although he later occasionally mentioned a brother in response to questions about why he acted the fool, there is no evidence for any siblings in the official sources. If, as seems likely, the widow and child were left alone and unprovided for, this goes some way towards explaining Castle's subsequent rambling and independent existence. Both parents would, however, have possessed an extended local family network, and it was usually the case that relatives would take in those who found themselves in such hardship.]

⁷ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

⁸ Unidentified 1841 newspaper cutting, pasted on the rear of the painting in Banbury Museum. Transcribed in Russell Wortley MSS., Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield, G III 5g. Also Adderbury parish registers.

⁹ Adderbury parish registers.

Probably 1800 - 1820

‘In his early childhood he experienced an accident which occasioned such deformity of his legs as to render him incapable of hard and steady labour.’¹⁰

‘An accident, which happened to him in early life, had injured his legs so much as to render him incapable of hard labour – to which he never professed any very strong attachment.’¹¹

‘Another source says that Old Mettle was a canal boatman and that he became lame because his leg was caught between two barges. He then earned a living by selling sulphur matches.’¹²

1818

‘Mettle’s chief fame arose, however from his being put forward, by the people of Banbury, as the candidate in opposition to the Guildford [*sic*] interest, at all the elections which occurred between 1818 and 1831; but, in the latter year, Mr. Easthope, and, subsequently, Mr. Tancred¹³, were set up in Mettle’s place. In 1818, Mettle was the opponent of the late lamented and beloved Hon. Frederick Sylvester North Douglas.’¹⁴

‘BANBURY. THE BOROUGH. – There lives a person who, many years ago, was a frequent mock-candidate for the honour of representing Banbury in Parliament. This person is Mr. Mettle. We well remember the time when poor Mettle used to climb upon the Town Hall steps, and harangue the gaping multitude after this fashion: – “Gentlemen, you shall none of you do no work when I go to Parliament, and you shall all have a half-peck loaf for fourpence.” The eloquence of Mettle was usually received with unbounded applause; but unfortunately his benevolent views lacked discernment in one particular – for Mettle could never point out the way in which those persons who *were to do no work* could come by the *fourpences* to buy their loaves with. Just such a scheme is that of the Whigs and Mr. Tancred, for ruining the town and trade of Banbury, and then mocking the people with the offer of cheap bad bread, which they could find no fourpences to pay for! As the scheme of Mettle, and that of

¹⁰ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

¹¹ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4 Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4.

¹² William Potts MSS., Banbury Museum. Box 28; 990,71,481, typescript of a letter to Mr [Thomas Ward] Boss, from G. Barrett, St Kilda, Vic. [*sic*], 16/17 May 1904, 8

¹³ See B.S. Trinder (ed.), *A Victorian M.P. and his Constituents The Correspondence of H.W. Tancred, 1841-1859* (Banbury Hist. Soc. 8, 1967) Sadly there are no letters from Tancred’s earlier years as M.P., and ‘Old Mettle’ is not mentioned.

¹⁴ As fn. 10.

the Whigs and Mr. Tancred, are thus identical, we submit to the public that, in common justice, Mettle, as being the original inventor, ought to have the credit of it: and though he was formerly but a mock-candidate, his prior claims being considered, we think he ought now be brought forward as a real candidate for Banbury. The fictitious estate in Yatesbury might surely do for Mettle as well as it has done for Mr. Tancred. Besides, there is something in Dean Swift's witty advice concerning his countrymen. "If," he says, "we are to have blockheads, at least give us leave to have our own blockheads." A blockhead, Mettle may be, and very likely is; but, upon the witty Dean's own shewing, if Mettle were to contend with Tancred, he oufht [*sic – ought*] to win in a canter.¹⁵

[This is a typical piece of contemporary political satire. There would certainly never have been any serious intention of putting Castle up as a candidate for Parliament. For a similarly pitched response see the entry for May 1841, pages 26-7. Castle's candidacy between 1818 and 1830 would have had many psychological and social aspects. Among the former was legitimate political expression by the disenfranchised which was sanctioned, even encouraged (see the entry immediately following), by the establishment. And among the latter were cultural diversions – or having a damned good time – consisting of parades, dressing up – even if simply wearing favours of ribbons or 'deal shavings' – and plenty of free beer. Although none is mentioned in any of the primary sources for Banbury, political rallies and elections often during this period featured one or more bands of music playing through the streets.]

'At a former period he was a remarkably popular person at the Borough Elections; and he has sometimes been sent for from a considerable distance on these occasions. No candidate was, at these times, suffered to be chaired, except in company with Mr. Mettle, with which honour the said candidates, of course, expressed themselves to be most exceedingly delighted and gratified!'¹⁶

November 1819

'On the death of that gentleman [*Frederick Sylvester North Douglas*] in 1819, Mettle was a second time a candidate for Banbury, in opposition to the

¹⁵ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 29 May 1841, 2.

¹⁶ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text.

Hon. Heneage Legge. Mettle's *colours* were deal shavings, which the ladies of the Banbury Rads most industriously made up into favours.¹⁷

[In November 1819 the Hon. Heneage Legge was elected in the Tory interest and was chaired through the streets with the usual distribution of favours and beer].¹⁸

Friday, 10 March 1820

'The death of George the Third caused another election within two or three months; on which occasion Mettle's supporters had increased so vastly in numbers and violence, that a riot ensued. On this or an after occasion, Mettle, who was in a distant part of the county on a boating expedition or something of the kind, was considered to be out of all possible reach of getting to the hustings on time; but he was sent for express, brought by coach more than a hundred miles, and, just before the poll, was borne into the town in triumph on the shoulders of his friends.'¹⁹

'On Friday the 10th inst. being the day appointed for the election of a Member of Parliament for this borough, a large concourse of people assembled, and it being generally understood that the usual practice of distributing beer and ribbons to the populace was to be discontinued, the persons assembled soon began to shew strong symptoms of disapprobation, by hissing, groaning, &c. and many of them paraded the streets with *favours*, made of *deal shavings*, in their hats. Whilst this was going on, a party proceeded to the White Lion Inn, and took possession of an old chaise, in which they placed a poor half-witted fellow, nick-named *Mettel*, and drew him to the Mayor's house, crying "Mettle for ever!" – "No

¹⁷ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

¹⁸ William Potts, *A History of Banbury*, (Banbury: Banbury Guardian, 1958), pp 203-204 (2nd edn., ed. E.T. Clark, Gulliver Press, 1978, pp.251-2, no alterations). Potts was born in 1868, and thus had no first hand knowledge of Castle. His sources for the election riot include a series of scrapbooks formerly in Banbury Museum (these are apparently no longer in the archive), containing information from Superintendent W. Thompson and Mr. W. Dickason, which he acknowledges, and Sarah Beesley's *My Life* (see below, fn. 22), which he does not. Some of this material was quoted in the article 'Banbury on the eve of reform' in the *Banbury Guardian*, 26 December 1889, page 6, although this does not mention Castle.

¹⁹ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4. The story as told – Mettle being rushed by 'coach' a hundred miles to the hustings – smacks of oral exaggeration. It was committed to print up to twenty years after the event itself. The most extreme axis of Oxfordshire was no more than half that distance. Circumspection is required, as with all orally transmitted evidence.

Legge!" A few stones were thrown through the Mayor's windows. The chaise was then placed in front of the Town Hall.²⁰

The Hon. Heneage Legge was elected Member of Parliament in this year. There was a great row at the election. When the Corporation went into the Town Hall to complete the election the crowd collected round the building and became exceedingly riotous, sending a shower of stones at the Town Hall windows. It had been intimated that there would not be so much beer given away as formerly, which enraged the mob. The Corporation tried to mend matters by offering beer, but this peace offering they then refused to accept. Bloxham, the sheriff's officer, put his head out of window holding a jug in his hand, and called out "Plenty of beer! plenty of beer!" but a shower of stones made him speedily withdraw. Two men then appeared carrying a large tub of beer slung on a pole; this the mob poured down a drain in the Market Place. The pebbles with which the Market Place was paved were turned up and used as missiles, the windows of the Town Hall being completely smashed. The mob threatened to pull the Town Hall down, with the Corporation inside it, and began picking at the pillars which supported it. The Rev. T.W. Lancaster, the Vicar of Banbury,²¹ who was a member of the corporate body, climbed into a sort of cock-loft under the clock, this did not bear his weight, and he went through, but happening to bestride a joist, he sat there with his legs dangling through the ceiling. One by one the members managed to steal away. Mr. William Walford got out and was walking across Corn Hill when half a brick, part of the Town Hall, hit him in the back, and he managed to get into the Plough Inn. Many others were hurt, and much rioting continued all day and night.²²

'In March following Parliament was dissolved and Mr. Legge had to seek re-election. He announced on this occasion he could not afford the expenses attached to the usual demonstrations and the election must proceed without them.

'This Disappointed and angered the populace and they proceeded to demonstrate accordingly.

²⁰ Jackson's Oxford Journal, 18 March 1820, 3.

²¹ See E.R.C. Brinkworth, 'A Nineteenth Century Vicar of Banbury: Thomas William Lancaster', *Cake & Cockhorse*, 2.4 (March 1963), pp. 57-61; and for his portrait, *Banbury Baptism and Burial Registers, Pt. 4, 1813-1838* (Banbury Historical Society 22, 1988), p. x.

²² Sarah Beesley, *My Life*, pp.18-19 ([Banbury]: 'Printed for private circulation,' [1892]). She was born Sarah Rusher in Banbury in March 1812.

'They obtained a post chaise and put old Mettle in it. This was a well-known character, who sold home-made matches in the town, clad in a collegian's cap and gown. They paraded him as their elected member, stopping at the Town Hall in the Market Place where the Council was proceeding with the election of Legge.

'They surrounded the Town Hall and became exceedingly riotous. The Council tried to mend matters by offering them beer and two men appeared carrying a large tub full of it which the mob poured down a drain. The pebbles with which the Market Place was paved were torn up and every window of the Hall was broken. They began to pick at the pillars supporting the Hall in execution of their threat to destroy it.

'The Councillors were in a great state of alarm and tried to escape. The Rev. T.W. Lancaster, the Vicar of Banbury, climbed into a little chamber beneath the clock, but the lath and plaster would not bear his weight and he fell through and would have crashed into the hall but he happened to bestride a beam with his legs dangling through the ceiling. Mr. W. Walford, the Town Clerk, was struck by a brick in the Cornhill and just managed to reach the Plough Inn.

'Meanwhile the crowd had been drawn off by their mistaking Mr. Timothy Cobb, the banker, for the member, to whom he bore some resemblance. They chased him up Butcher's Row to the bank in High Street which he managed to reach, while Mr. Legge got to the Red Lion and escaped in a chaise.'²³

Circa 1823 or 1824

'...as we lived in the London Yard and our house at the back was in the churchyard, I was a great deal with Briner and old Mettle. When Briner got old he employed old Mettle to dig the graves, so you will see now how it was that I knew so much of these two curious characters.'²⁴

[Herbert was born 1814, and aged 9½ when living in London Yard].

*'I come now in order of the church officials to the Dog-whipper whose name was Briner ["An official formerly employed to whip dogs out of a church or chapel. Locally retained, as an appellation of a sexton or beadle." O.E.D.] His office was to attend in front of the church to see to the chiming of the bells for church and the winding up of the clock and chimes and the digging of the graves, attending to the churchyard, lighting the fires under the church for heating purposes, etc.'*²⁵

²³ As fn. 18, Potts, *History of Banbury*, pp. 203-04.

²⁴ As fn. 6, Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window*, p. 8.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41; *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 18 March 1820, 3.

Saturday, 10 June 1826

'In 1826, on two different occasions, Mettle was the opponent of the Hon. A.C. Legge.'²⁶

*'GENERAL ELECTION – On Saturday last the Hon. Arthur C. Legge was unanimously re-elected for the borough of Banbury. The Hon. Member was chaired amidst the acclamations of the surrounding multitude, and the day passed off with the greatest good humour and hilarity.'*²⁷

June – September 1827

'When the small pox raged at Banbury in 1827, Mettle was the constant and fearless nightly burier of the dead.'²⁸

*I will endeavour to describe the fair which took place when that dreadful calamity fell upon the town, and the small-pox came upon us. It was at a Twelfth Fair. This was as large a fair at this time as was the Michaelmas Fair, but was a pleasure fair entirely, and there were a lot of shows and other amusements. In one of these shows was a camera obscura: this was quite a new sight at fairs and obtained a large amount of patronage, but in another part of this same show was a man dead with the small-pox, unknown to the people who visited it, and this was how so many caught the disease, not only in the town but in the neighbourhood.'*²⁹

*'According to the parish register of 1827, 73 persons died of the small-pox in that year. The infection was brought into the town at the Holy Thursday Fair – not Twelfth Fair which was, and still is, a horse fair. Michaelmas Fair was a hiring fair, or "mop", and has been also a great pleasure fair up the present day.'*³⁰

[The epidemic raged through the town between June and September.]

²⁶ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4

²⁷ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 17 June 1826, 4

²⁸ As fn. 26.

²⁹ As fn. 6, Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window*, pp. 113-14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114, footnote by C.S. Cheney; see also *Baptism and Burial Registers of Banbury, Pt. 4, 1813-1838* (Banbury Historical Society 22, 1988), pp. 124-25; and Sarah Beesley, *My Life*, p. 33 (as fn. 22).

Probably 1820s or 1830s

‘One of the most remarkable characters living in Banbury sixty years ago was a man named William Castle, who always went by the name of “Old Metal.” He was a born comedian, full of oddities of speech and drollery. His name was a terror to children to whom he was known as “the Bogieman.”’³¹

“‘Old Mettle” was a well-known character. He lived in a lodging house and frequently wore a college cap and gown. He was a very odd-looking man, with his mouth always half open, and one of his legs very much bent; and made his living by splitting wood into matches and dipping the ends in brimstone. These he hawked about the street, carrying a bundle of them on the end of a stick over his shoulder, and sold a penny worth or halfpenny worth to his customers. He frequently rested himself upon people’s doorsteps. One day when on ours, with his matches by him, I recollect my father asking him why he made such a fool of himself, when he looked up at my father with his usual vacant smile, and said, – “Why, sir; I beant sich a fool as I looks. I’ve got a brother as works ‘ard for his livin’, and nobody never gies him half a pint, but they gie me lots every day.”’³²

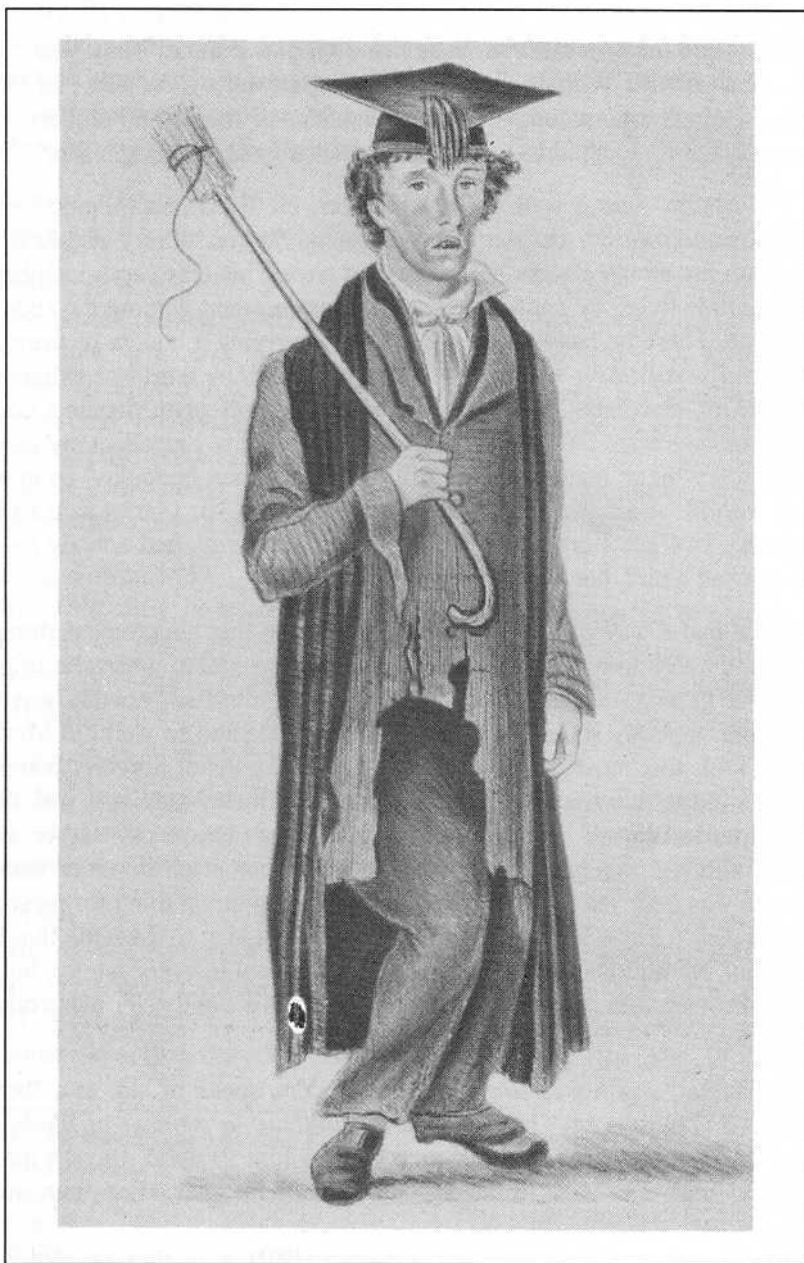
‘Mettle had a way of living by his wits, and, so that his crooked stumps would but carry him from village-wake to village-wake, where he might amuse the gaping crowds around him by playing the fool, nobody was so happy, nor anybody so independent, as he! So long and so well did Mettle ape the fool, that most persons considered him for years as really being a fool. His ostensible trade, when not engaged at merry-makings, was that which Mettle himself would dignify by the appellation of “carver and gilder,” although many persons would confer upon it an humbler name. When he was believed to be a fool, it was a very common thing for persons to try to play tricks upon him...Another person one day told Mettle that he was a fool. Mettle replied, there was always one fool in every family, but it was his brother, and not he, that was the fool of his family, for his brother went to work!’³³

“‘Old Metal” again was another celebrity. You speak of him as a “born comedian”. The late Mr Cadbury [*James Cadbury, a member of Banbury Corporation*], I have been told, once said to him “Friend, though art a greater k than f”. Most folks would agree with that. The man was

³¹ Thomas Ward Boss, *Reminiscences of Old Banbury* (1903), p. 24. Boss was born in 1825, and lived for his first seven years in Oxford, before moving to Banbury.

³² As fn. 22, Sarah Beesley, *My Life*, pp. 14-15.

³³ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.



'Old Mettle': commercially-produced lithograph, probably 1840, based on an original oil painting in Banbury Museum.

originally a canal boatman; his leg was once caught between the tow-rope of two passing barges, and so severely lacerated that he was lamed for life. He then started as a brimstone match vender, a collector of trifles of “old metal”, and a buffoon generally. Mrs John Cheney Sr. has an excellent portrait of him painted by our much-esteemed old friend, her late husband.³⁴

[The final sentence here refers to a painting by John Cheney in 1840 – oil on canvas, approximately 7 x 11 inches – which now hangs in Banbury Museum. A handwritten sheet of paper slipped into the frame alcove at the rear of the canvas – the text of which immediately follows this note – states, however, that the artist was Joseph Scarcebrook Prior to Castle’s death, Cheney – a local printer – had an engraving made of the painted image, and printed copies for sale, and perhaps the engraving was the work of Scarcebrook. Another source – see below – ascribes the painting to one Mr. Levy. Janet Blunt of Adderbury possessed a copy of the lithograph, which she sent to Cecil Sharp.³⁵ It is reproduced here. On Monday, 28 April 1986 I interviewed Frederick and Winifred G. Wyatt in their home at Adderbury. She had been maid to Janet Blunt, and after her death had rescued the manuscripts relating to dance and song collected by Blunt during the first quarter of the twentieth century – before relatives burned everything they considered worthless – and posted them directly to the English Folk Dance and Song Society in London. She showed me an original painting – on wood, about 9 x 12 inches, lacquered and fading with age into an overall brown, and very similar to the copy in Banbury Museum – on which the lithograph Blunt sent to Sharp was based. On the rear of the painting, in Blunt’s handwriting, was the legend: “This picture was given to Miss Janet H Blunt of Adderbury Manor. Oxon by Mrs Joseph Welch senior of West Adderbury..Old Metal was the fool of the Morris [illegible word] side in which William Walton. His [illegible word] was George Castle.”]

‘This Sketch by Joseph Scarcebrook is a fair likeness of William Castle an eccentric man who lived for many years in Banbury and was well known to the writer and to most of the Inhabitants of the Town both old and young as “Old Metal.” this was at the time when the Tinder-box, Flint & Steel were in use for striking a light, and this man got his living by

³⁴ William Potts MSS., Banbury Museum. Box 28; 990,71,481, typescript of a letter to Mr. [Thomas Ward] Boss, from G. Barrett, St. Kilda, Vic. [sic], 16/17 May 1904, 8.

³⁵ Janet Heatley Blunt MSS., as fn. 5

making the kind of matches then used, and hawking them round the Town dressed in the garb as represented, but he did not knock at the doors as most other sellers of matches did, but tied a few on the end of a stick and held them up to the windows & made a funny noise as he went past, the people then either sent or went out to buy the matches they required.³⁶

‘I will now tell you something about old Mettle. He was always supposed to be what the Scotch call “daft,” that is, I suppose, what we call “silly,” but I know better than that. He was no more daft than I am, but he knew how to make himself appear so. When you knew him well, he could converse with you as well as any one, but old Mettle knew how his bread was buttered and he would make himself appear as big a fool as he pleased.’³⁷

‘He was fond of obtaining any grotesque piece of apparel – sometimes a cocked hat; sometimes a trencher cap and college gown...and sometimes a lady’s curls, surmounted by a straw bonnet and flowers, adorned his face.’³⁸

‘Mettle’s favourite dress was of the oddest patchwork sort that he could put together. Sometimes he wore a huge cocked hat like a beadle. On another occasion, a straw hat or bonnet of enormous dimensions, which some un-English lady had brought from Paris. On two occasions, and two only, he assumed a graver garb. In one instance, some wag of the University of Oxford gave him a cap and gown, in which Mettle did not fail to go about, and in which he stood for his portrait to Mr. Levy, which was lithographed, and it is now a rare and precious gem in the collections of the curious.’³⁹

‘One of Mettle’s occasional avocations, at fairs and such like times, was to receive from the beggars and other meagre itinerants such of their children as they could not lug about in the crowd: these he took great care of, laid the quiet ones down on the floor, and took up each squalling one in turn and handled it like a parent. – sympathy with his own class was also deeply shewn by many a halfpenny of Mettle’s (too often the last he possessed) being bestowed upon some wretched wayfarer...Yet, possessing these kind qualities, Mettle was, from his singular appearance and habits, made the bugbear of the town and neighbourhood, and every young person

³⁶ A single sheet of handwritten text – undated, but apparently nineteenth century – slipped into the rear frame alcove of the painting which hangs in Banbury Museum.

³⁷ As fn. 6, Herbert, *Shoemaker’s Window*, p 9.

³⁸ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text.

³⁹ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.



Silhouette of William Castle. No earlier original has been traced than the reproduction in Alfred Beesley's extra-illustrated copy of 'History of Banbury' (1841), Centre For Oxfordshire Studies, Oxford Library, vol 12, p. 101, with the caption, 'WILLIAM CASTLE, called METTLE, a half idiot, started by the Populace as Opposition Candidate in 1820'.

of this vicinity, whose age does not exceed twenty-five years, must remember being tortured and ruled in infancy by the parental threat – “Mettle shall have you!”⁴⁰

‘He was also an enormous chewer of tobacco. This he also used to beg. I once saw him coming up Parson’s Street, and he met at the corner of Church Lane Mr. Mallam, and Mr. C. Page used at that time to keep a grocer’s and seedsman’s shop. Old Mettle met them gossiping at the shop-door, and Mettle says to Mr. Page “Give us a bit of baccie, Master.” Mr. Page walked into his shop and took down his tobacco-jar and says, “Open your mouth, old fellow,” and he put into his mouth as much as ever he could get in, and Mallam then up with his stick and crammed it in tighter. Such were the jokes that Mettle liked to have played upon him.’⁴¹

‘You know how he used to dress in an old collegian’s gown and trencher-cap and go about the streets with a bunch of matches stuck upon the end of his stick, and carry this across his shoulder. These matches he used to make himself. He would beg his wood at any carpenter’s shop, and his brimstone for dipping the matches he could always beg of one of the ironmongers, so you see his was all profit.’⁴²

‘His ostensible mode of gaining a livelihood was by selling matches, but we believe he relied more upon the clearings of pantries of those who were inclined to befriend him, than upon his own exertions.’⁴³

‘Ought not to forget *Old Mettle* who used to be up in the Morn to go his rounds into peoples front gardens in search of his ?daintes [*sic* –?dainty] Snails when the boys teased him he would swing round his rod with its line and tail at the end like a Corn Therhers [*sic* – *Thresher’s*] Flail with such a Whack unto their backs make them squeal Oh Mettle have you been stung by a Nettle or has a Bee settled on your Knee.’⁴⁴

“Old Mettle” *made* + sold, – rush-lights, for his living – he “peddled” all about the district, and lived rather anyhow, in barns + hovels; + at last

⁴⁰ *Ibid*

⁴¹ As fn. 6, Herbert, *Shoemaker’s Window*, p. 9.

⁴² As fn. 6, Herbert, *Shoemaker’s Window*, p. 9.

⁴³ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text.

⁴⁴ William Potts MSS. Box 28; 990,71,329, commercial exercise book, f.11½. Legend [on f.1] ‘Some Recollections [*sic*] of Old Banburie over 60 years ago No 1’ and ‘Experiences and thoughts By an old Banbury’.

was found dead on the road to Banbury from here [*Adderbury*]. This is a bundle of rush-lights he is carrying on his stick – just as he did in his wanderings; but I gathered from old W. Walton that he used to flick the onlookers with a bladder on a cow-tail when he went with the Morris Men as the Fool; but wore this queer dress *then*... Taplin, of the Dealer's Shop where I got it, said, "He *O.M.* was a very Celebrated Banbury character in old days"⁴⁵

[*William Walton (1837-1919) was the last leader of the Adderbury Morris Dancers. His father – also William Walton (1806-1848) – had been leader before him, and it must be this earlier period to which the younger Walton's anecdotes relate, as he himself would have been aged merely four years old when Castle died*]

Circa 1830s

'Besides this he was foremost at all the merry-makings and would be seen in all kinds of odd coloured garments, which some of the people would be sure to give him at such times, one side of his face would be shaved and the other not, or disfigured in some way with paint &c. He was a very remarkable man & much more might be written of his merry odd ways and drole tricks. he was the laughing stock of all who saw him.'⁴⁶

'He is best remembered as the fool of the King Sutton Morrice Dancers. This troupe always came to Banbury for a few days at Whitsuntide, when Old Metal, in a queer, fanciful dress, with his staff, bladder and calf's tail, would keep the crowd at a distance, whilst his ready wit, grimaces, and marvellous powers of contortion kept crowds of grown-up people in roars of laughter. He was fond of appearing in different characters.'⁴⁷

"Old Mettle" also used to go with the morris dancers to the clubs, etc. I have seen him with the eight morris dancers in Banbury, all of them in their shirt sleeves, with bells tied by ribbons of all colours on their arms and legs, and wearing white trousers, "Mettle" acting as merryman to the lot, dressed in similar style, and with his face painted. They all danced and each had two white pocket handkerchiefs to whirl about in time with the music.'⁴⁸

'The wit and jokes in use in the village [*Bloxham*] were of a simple nature, but did good service year after year, and always came up fresh.

⁴⁵ Janet Heatley Blunt MSS., as fn. 5.

⁴⁶ As fn. 36, MS at Banbury Museum.

⁴⁷ As fn. 31, Boss, *Reminiscences of Old Banbury*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ As fn. 22, Sarah Beesley, *My Life*, p.15.

Probably a new set of jokes, and the disuse of the old ones, would have been resented by the audience. Village tradition tells of a famous “squire” who made a good deal of money by dancing. One of his most telling jokes (among a purely agricultural population) was that he knew plenty of bigger fools than himself, e.g., those standing round him, for they worked for their living and he didn’t.⁴⁹

‘The Morris dancers were great in Bloxham until about 40 years ago. Charles Townsend and [blank] were in the last batch.

‘They were decked out pretty in Coventry ribbons + had bells on their legs. Besides the dancers were one who played the Tabor (a small drum) + piper 3 notes only: also the “Squire” a clown who made witty remarks and had a stick with a calf’s tail at one end + a bullocks [this word crossed out] bladder blown out + having a handful of peas inside: he asked riddles and knocked the boys with resounding bangs over the head with the bladder. Bloxham + Souldern danced against one another at the former place: the crowd was judge, + as may be imagined B won: tho’ S had the best dancers B had the best clown + that took the people. Morris dancing took place at Whitsuntide.⁵⁰

‘B- [Bloxham] was always noted for its Morris-dancers, and with a neighbouring village (S- [Souldern]) some six miles distant, enjoyed a local reputation. These villages danced against one-another at B- one evening in the early summer. The crowd were the judges, and, as may be surmised, B- won the match. For although the S- men danced better than their opponents, B- had the best “squire”, + this took the people’s fancy.’⁵¹

‘John Barrett confirmed a/c. said [morris] was danced at “Statute” also. sometimes 8 of them. One Mettal was a great “fool” one of his jokes was that he knew a bigger fool than himself: naming someone”, ‘cause he works for his livin’ + I don’t.’⁵²

‘The horse-bells remind me of the morris-dancers. The countrymen used to practise their dancing at most of the villages, and at certain seasons of the year used to come into the town and go through their various dances, and then make a collection from the onlookers, and some of them were very clever at it. The men were dressed in their best, and wore white shirts with plaited sleeves and ribbons tied round their arms, and upon their legs

⁴⁹ O.V. Aplin collection, Oxfordshire Record Office. Apl.III/iii/3, notes for a proposed lecture entitled ‘A vanished Custom’, written circa 1894.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² *Ibid.* Apl.III/iii/18, f.1v, dated 19 April 1894.

were rows of small bells sewn upon strips of coloured leather. These bells were made in the same form as the horse-bells, that is to say they were of a round form with a slot in them, and a round shot to make them jingle as they danced. In size they were about as large as a marble, but the bells upon the horses were as large as a man's fist. In some of the morris-dances, each man carried a white stick about an inch in thickness and about eighteen inches in length, and this stick was used in their dances, sometimes tapping each other's stick together, and at other times one was held over the other's head, one dancer tapped his fellow-dancer with his stick, and at other times they would each have a white handkerchief and flourish in similar form. Their music was of a rude kind and known as the tabor and pipe. Their pipe was a one-handed flute with about four holes – three on the upper side for the fingers, and one underneath for the thumb. This was played with the left hand, and upon the little finger was held the tabor which was tapped by the right hand. The tabor was a small drum something like a tambourine. There was also a clown fantastically dressed who carried a long stick with a bladder at one end and calf's tail at the other for keeping off the boys, and sometimes he would have a handful of flour in his pocket, and if he found a boy very troublesome he used his flour with a handful in his face. This generally caused a laugh, and quieted him.⁵³

1830

'Mettle's last Parliamentary attempt was in 1830, when he was the opponent of Mr. Villiers Stuart. Although Mettle was never elected, he was quite sure to be chaired: and Mr. Heneage Legge will doubtless remember being chaired in Mettle's company, and how Mettle afterwards addressed him for it as "brother."⁵⁴

Sunday, 22 August 1830

'W Castle brought in by R Horseman for stealing a Watch from the house of W Smith Neithrop.'⁵⁵

Monday, 23 August to Thursday, 26 August 1830

[Castle was locked up for a total of four nights.]⁵⁶

⁵³ As fn. 6, Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window*, p. 119

⁵⁴ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

⁵⁵ P. Renold (ed), *Banbury Gaol Records [1829–1839]* (Banbury Hist. Soc. 21, 1987), p. 5

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Thursday, 2 December 1830

‘William Castle Charles Gibbard & Pitcher brought by Thompson on charge of stealing Fowls from Mr James Golby.’⁵⁷

Friday, 3 December 1830

*[Castle was locked up for two nights.]*⁵⁸

Saturday, 4 December 1830

‘Castle, Gibbard & Pitcher taken to Oxford.’⁵⁹

‘On one occasion, and, as far as we know, on one only, Mettle fell into deeper sorrow, and perhaps into crime. He was tried at Oxford on a charge of being concerned, with others, in a burglary at Neithrop: he tried playing the fool in Court, in order to get off, and made most ugly faces at the Judge; but it wouldn’t do there – he was found guilty, and sentenced to be hanged, at which Mettle grinned worse than before. But here fortune favoured him at last, for a petition from his Banbury friends shewed him to be generally considered an idiot, and then he received a pardon.’⁶⁰

‘About 20 years since he was tried, in company with others at Oxford, for a burglary at Neithrop, and sentenced to die, but was pardoned on the petition of persons who had long known him, and who believed he had been the dupe of designing men.’⁶¹

‘He was a parishioner of Neithrop, in which place he gained a settlement by sleeping in an old boat, moored by the side of the canal: many amusing circumstances were related at a trial, when Neithrop was saddled with the charge of him.’⁶²

[Neithrop was a populous and unruly suburb outside the borough but in the parish of Banbury. The area just north of the borough boundary adjacent to the canal could well be considered as part of Neithrop.]

Tuesday, 7 June 1831

‘W Castle & William Hall brought by D Claridge Charged with breaking open a House at Shutford.’⁶³

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

⁶¹ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text.

⁶² *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text.

⁶³ As fn. 55, Renold, *Banbury Gaol Records*, p. 10

Wednesday, 8 June 1831

'Castle & Hall taken to Broughton & Committed to Oxford by Mr Wyatt.'⁶⁴
[Castle was locked up for two nights.]⁶⁵

Thursday, 9 June 1831

'Castle & Hall taken to Oxford by D Claridge on the Coach at 3 O Clock.'⁶⁶

'OXFORD. *Commitments to our County Gaol* ... James Hall and William Castle, charged with breaking open the dwelling house of Isaac Smith, at Shutford East, and stealing therefrom a gold watch, &c.'⁶⁷

Monday, 3 October 1831

'Robert Griffin of Shutford brought by D Claridge charged with being with Castle and Hall at the Robbery at Shutford.'⁶⁸

After July 1832

'His favourite trade of aping the fool did not serve him always; his match trade was but precarious, and when the Reform Bill did away with Mettle's popularity, by giving votes to his supporters, they pitifully turned their backs upon him, and set up Tancred instead. In his state of almost destitution, Saturday, with its *emptied pantries*, was his best friend. He gained a settlement in Neithrop township by sleeping in an old boat that was moored by the side of the canal.'⁶⁹

1834

'The New Poor-Law was as bad a blow to Mettle as was the Reform Bill; but to send Mettle to the Poor-house would have annihilated all the then popularity of the Whigs – worse than sending Frost to Tasman's Peninsula, or Richard Oastler to the Fleet – and therefore some out-door relief was obtained for him.'⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁷ *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 11 June 1831, 3.

⁶⁸ As fn. 55, Renold, *Banbury Gaol Records*, p. 11.

⁶⁹ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

Tuesday, 21 April 1835

‘William Castle alias Mettle brought from the Cage by R Butler on Charge of breaking Mr Grimbley’s Windows.’⁷¹

[Castle does not appear to have been locked up overnight for this offence, but see below for his punishment]

Thursday, 23 April 1835

‘Metal taken to the Office and Ordered to sit in the stocks 4 hours.’⁷²

Tuesday, 30 May 1837

‘The other instance of Mettle’s gravity was when his mother died. The poor fellow, who was a diligent church-goer, thought it right on that occasion to appear like other people; so he begged a common hat, a common coat, waistcoat, and trousers, all of rusty black, with a white shirt, and, for a time, looked almost like a gentleman.’⁷³

*[Anne Castle, living at the time of her death at Adderbury-West, was buried in Adderbury churchyard on Tuesday, 30 May 1837, aged 74]*⁷⁴

Sunday, 4 June 1837

‘When she died, he succeeded in getting, from one quarter or another, a decent suit of black, and a white shirt, and we recollect seeing him on the following Sunday, returning from Church, for the first time dressed like other people.’⁷⁵

Probably Friday, 9 April 1841

‘He had had two fits previously; and had complained of a pain in his head ever since our last fair, when someone tripped up his heels, and he fell heavily on the back of his head.’⁷⁶

May 1841

‘THE NEW CANDIDATE. – In our last number we promised that if the Tories of Banbury remained for another week destitute of a candidate, we would direct them to one: but as it appeared by the *Oxfordshire Herald* of the same date that they had been successful, and that Mr. W. Metal

⁷¹ As fn. 55, Renold, *Banbury Gaol Records*, p. 35. ‘Mr Grimbley’ is likely to have been Richard Grimbley, a grocer and wine/spirit merchant in the High Street (Rusher’s *Banbury List*, 1835).

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁷³ As fn. 69.

⁷⁴ Adderbury Parish Registers.

⁷⁵ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4.

⁷⁶ As fn. 8, unidentified 1841 newspaper cutting.

(erroneously spelt “Mettle” in the Herald) was to oppose Mr. Tancred, on the Tory interest, we did not suppose that we should be called upon to redeem our pledge. Still as the sudden death of the man of their choice (fortune will surely never weary of persecuting them) must have altogether deranged them of their plans, we feel bound in honour to give them some assistance, especially as we have always desired that they should start the best man they could get. There are those of the party who must have felt some doubt of the propriety of supporting Metal, because the speech delivered by him, as quoted in the Herald, shews that he was an advocate for untaxed food, of which most Tories have a greater horror than they have of the starvation of their fellow creatures, and therefore whatever might have been the exertions of the subdistributor of stamps at Banbury, and Mr. Metal’s other personal friends and admirers, who from attachment to the individuals might have waived some of their opinions, still he could hardly, from the cause above stated, been generally acceptable to their party.’⁷⁷

[This is a satirical response to the piece quoted in the 1818 section, pp. 9-10.]

Tuesday, 1 June 1841

‘On the preceding evening he had, in the vocation of fool, accompanied a party of Morris Dancers round Banbury, and seemed, and no doubt felt, in as high glee as he had ever been.’⁷⁸

‘No longer ago than Tuesday sen-night Mettle was as merry as Whitsuntide could make him, parading the streets of Banbury with a troop of morris-dancers.’⁷⁹

Wednesday, 2 June 1841

‘The following morning, while mending his patchwork dress, with the intention of going to Adderbury Club, he fell from his seat and expired instantly.’⁸⁰

‘On Wednesday morning he got up, and began to mend his patchwork that he might go to Adderbury club. He had rested at a lodging-house kept by Mrs. Thorp, and, as he sat by the grate, was also nursing Mrs. T.’s infant. Suddenly he said to a little girl who was in the room – “Take the babby;” and then immediately fell against the grate, the little girl, afraid,

⁷⁷ *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4

⁷⁸ *The Guardian* [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4.

⁷⁹ *Oxford University, City, and County Herald*, 12 June 1841, 4.

⁸⁰ As fn. 78.

fetches her mother; the poor fellow rattled a little in his throat; the woman sent for the doctor, but before that aid could arrive Mettle was quite dead. A jury sat, and returned a verdict of "Death from apoplexy."⁸¹

'His age was 52 or 53. The surgeon who made the post mortem examination stated, that on opening the head, he found that the death had been caused by an effusion of blood upon the brain, which had probably been accelerated by the exertions which the deceased had used on the preceding day, when in attendance upon the morris dancers.'⁸²

'His "household effects," which consist of a heap of straw, a pocket-knife, a stool, and a table, fall (we suppose) into the hands of the parish authorities.'⁸³

Friday, 4 June 1841

*[William Castle was buried in Banbury on Friday, 4 June 1841. In the burial register entry his age was given as 52, and his place of habitation at the time of death as Grimsbury.]*⁸⁴

SOURCES

Jackson's Oxford Journal, 18 March 1820, 3; 11 June 1831, 3.

Oxford University, City, and County Herald, 29 May 1841, 2; 12 June 1841, 4.

The Guardian [Banbury], 5 June 1841, 4. Also in *Oxford Chronicle*, 5 June 1841, 4, with identical text.

Unidentified 1841 newspaper cutting, pasted on the rear of the painting in Banbury Museum. Transcribed in Russell Wortley MSS., Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language, University of Sheffield, G III 5g.

A single sheet of handwritten text – undated, but apparently nineteenth century – slipped into the rear frame alcove of the painting in Banbury Museum.

Sarah Beesley, *My Life* ([Banbury]: 'Printed for private circulation,' [1892]). She was born Sarah Rusher in Banbury in March 1812.

O.V. Aplin collection, Oxfordshire Archives. Apl.III/iii/3, notes for a proposed lecture entitled 'A vanished Custom', written circa 1894; also Apl.III/iii/18, f.1v, dated 19 April 1894.

Thomas Ward Boss, *Reminiscences of Old Banbury* (1903), p. 24. Boss was born in 1825, and lived for his first seven years in Oxford, before moving to Banbury.

⁸¹ As fn. 79.

⁸² As fn. 8, unidentified 1841 newspaper cutting.

⁸³ As fn. 79.

⁸⁴ Banbury burial register.

William Potts MSS., Banbury Museum. Box 28; 990,71,481, typescript of a letter to Mr. [Thomas Ward] Boss, from G. Barrett, St. Kilda, Vic. [sic], 16/17 May 1904, 8.

Janet Heatley Blunt MSS., Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, London. Volume XIX, letter to Cecil Sharp, 1 May 1922.

George Herbert, *Shoemaker's Window. Recollections of a Midland Town before the Railway Age*, ed. Christiana S. Cheney (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949; 2nd edn. ed. B.S. Trinder, Banbury Historical Society 10, 1971; reprinted as 3rd edn., Gulliver Press, Banbury, 1979). Herbert's original handwritten manuscript consists of 190 foolscap pages, written as a series of letters to friends circa 1898 to 1900. He died 21 December 1902.

P. Renold (ed.), *Banbury Gaol Records* [Gaoler's Journal, October 1829 – December 1839] (Banbury Historical Society 21, 1987).

William Potts MSS. Box 28; 990,71,329, commercial exercise book, f.11½. Legend [on f.1] 'Some Reccolections [sic] of Old Banburie over 60 years ago No 1' and 'Experiences and thoughts By an old Banbury'.

William Potts, *A History of Banbury* (Banbury: *Banbury Guardian*, 1958), pp. 203-204 (2nd edn., ed. E.T. Clark, Gulliver Press, 1978, pp. 251-2, no alteration). Potts was born in 1868, and thus had no first hand knowledge of Castle. His sources for the election riot include a series of scrapbooks in Banbury Borough Museum (these are apparently no longer in the archive), containing information from Superintendent W. Thompson and Mr. W. Dickason, which he acknowledges, and Sarah Beesley's *My Life* (above), which he does not. Some of this material was quoted in the article 'Banbury on the eve of reform' in the *Banbury Guardian*, 26 December 1889, page 6, although this does not mention Castle.

More detailed analysis of the performance of morris dancing, Castle's involvement with various dance sets, and the social context may be found in my "*Ribbons, Bells and Squeaking Fiddles*": *The Social History of Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660-1900* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, for the Folklore Society, 1993); and *Morris Dancing in the English South Midlands, 1660-1900. A Chronological Gazetteer* (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik Press, for the Folklore Society, 1993). See also my 'Morris Dancing in the Banbury Region', *Cake & Cockhorse* 8.5 (Spring 1981), pp. 146-150.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the assistance of Malcolm Graham and his staff at the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Oxford Library; Simon Townsend (Senior Museum Officer) and Chris Kelly (Assistant Curator) at Banbury Museum; Martin Allitt at the Centre for Banburyshire Studies, Banbury Library; Malcolm Taylor (Librarian), Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, Cecil Sharp House, London; Vera Wood.

‘FROM THATCH TO FIRE’

Kevin Wyles, Tysoe Local History Society

I have been invited by the Banbury Historical Society to write a summary of our recently published book, *From Thatch to Fire*.

This is in two parts – first, about Tysoe Fire Service from 1897 to 1998; second, a look at old photos of Lower, Middle and Upper Tysoe.

It all started with a meeting in Tysoe on 20 July 1897 with the intention of forming a Fire Brigade to serve the villages of Tysoe and Compton Wynyates. In the presence of the Marquess of Northampton twenty men from Tysoe met in the old school room, and the ‘Tysoe and Compton Wynyates Volunteer Fire Brigade’ was formed, with appropriate rules and charges.

Lord Northampton gave the Brigade an old thatched flailing barn in Tysoe to be used as a fire station and a small horse-drawn hand-manual fire engine to fight the fires.

Sunrising Hill was always a potential source of accidents: on 6 July 1899 two horse-drawn vehicles; in 1907 an American was killed. More dramatically, in 1910 a Menagerie overturned. The bugle was sounded and the firemen with villagers set off with guns and nets, as they were told that lions were roaming around on the local hills.

In 1901 there was a fire in the tower of Tysoe church. This was put out with a hose line from the small manual, using water from the brook by the church gate.

A second-hand manual pump was purchased from the Kineton Fire Brigade in 1933 for the then large sum of three pounds. This exhausted the Brigade’s funds and an appeal to the public was necessary for money to buy a new hose. A year later horses were superseded by the village coal lorry to pull the manual to fires.

In the run-up to the Second World War air raid precautions were posted around the village in 1938, and a siren was positioned on a scaffolding tower. A telephone was put into the thatched fire station. It was not until 1941 that the station was taken over by the National Fire Service, part of Region 23. The Brigade was supplied with a new pump and auxiliary towing vehicle. There were many crashes of Wellington bombers from R.A.F. Edgehill. The crew were even called to fires in central Birmingham.

After the war, in 1948, the Brigade was incorporated in the new Warwick County Brigade. Even so they still had the trailer pump until 1952, then a hose reel tender. Eventually this was replaced by a brand-new specially designed appliance, with a ladder let into the roof of the cab and the bells on the front of the engine, so it could fit under the beams of the thatched station. Thatch was as always a great danger, and the Brigade was kept busy with thatch fires in many neighbouring villages.

Seventy-five years after its creation, the Brigade at last had a new station (unthatched!) built on the playing field, with modern pump and breathing apparatus for use inside buildings. The usual calls to nearby places included a serious fire at McGregory Cory in Banbury, and fires at Tadmerton House and Ettington Park Hotel.

From 1985 the Brigade was part of the Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. One incident it attended was an accident in Wroxton where a Land Rover overturned in a ditch and the driver was covered in poisonous cyanide. The crew were giving cover to fire stations in a wide area. In Banbury calls were to the Churchill Club, Altrovar, Alcan Laboratories and Overthorpe Industrial Estate. They attended aircraft crashes at Shenington and Lighthorne, and a petrol bomb in Bloxham's Queen Street.

The Brigade's centenary in 1997 was enhanced by the Tysoe crew's victory in the hose-running competition at the Hook Norton Fire Brigade's centenary event. Ironically that same year saw the County Council's decision to close the station, made on 3 December. The station was to close in May 1998.

But on 9 April 1998 the crew had one of their greatest challenges: the Easter floods. They rescued nineteen people (and a dog) from four feet of water at Wellesbourne, and, by pushing a boat in five feet of freezing water, forty people (and eleven dogs and a parrot) from flooded caravans at Stratford.

A month later the station was closed.

In part two there are 115 photographs of Tysoe past.

From Thatch to Fire, by Kevin Wyles, Tysoe Local History Society, 244 pp, costs £12.50 and can be bought in Ottakars and F Stop Photo in Banbury.

WOAD IN SHENINGTON

Nan Clifton

Vivien Billington's article in the last issue of *C&CH* rekindled my interest in woad – 'A herb, a biennial plant from which black, blue or green dyestuff was formerly obtained'. In my booklet *Shenington: Village on the Shining Hill* (1991), a paragraph on woad ends with a little drawing of the plant, done by Hazel Robinson.

As the smell of woad – sometimes corrupted to 'wad' or 'wood' – was very offensive, it was grown in fairly remote areas – hence 'Wad Hill' in Shenington (looking down the lynchetts). This hill is so named on the 'Map of the Common Fields in the Parish of Shenington' (1732), a copy of which hangs on my kitchen wall – courtesy of Oriel College and a constant joy to me for many years.

The woad from Wad Hill and also that from Wroxton would have been taken to Woad Mill in Broughton. Transcribing the Wroxton parish registers, some years ago, I found a burial which reads '...Jeacock – one of the woad women.' Not a pleasant job, preparing her for burial!

Having just compiled this little contribution [now hi-jacked by the editors of *C&CH*, but really intended for *Shenington Green*, the village twice-yearly newsletter], I showed it to a friend. To my amazement she produced an item from a Sunday newspaper stating that researchers are again growing woad in Cornwall and East Anglia as a potential source of ink for computer printers.

Perhaps Wad Hill will again produce woad and, if so, will the smell be any more offensive than today's oil seed rape?

Shenington: Village on the Shining Hill, by Nan Clifton, is available from her at £2.50 incl. p&p, at Windwistle, Shenington, Banbury, Oxon.

Long-time members will recall our splendid Banbury Historical Society dinners at Woadmill Farm, Broughton, home of our late editor David Fiennes, in 1979 and 1981 (when Nan Clifton was our Hon. Secretary).



woad

Lecture Reports

Brian Little and Jeremy Gibson

Thursday 14th September 2000.

History in English Words – Edmond Weiner, Principal Philologist, Oxford English Dictionary Department, Oxford University Press.

The first edition of the famous Oxford English Dictionary appeared in twenty volumes from the 1880s to the 1920s, There were four supplements in the years that followed, and a second edition whose main purpose was to absorb the words that had been in these.

In the century and more that had passed since first publication the world, and its English words, had changed vastly. The latest edition, and its availability on an Internet web-site, has allowed for complete revision and expansion. Most publicity is given to the incorporation of new words, but Mr Weiner's theme was the discovery of occurrences of words in past centuries where none had before been recorded.

The sources for early usage had in the first edition tended to come from works of literature and what is known today as the 'establishment'. It had been a revelation to discover that local historical societies such as ours were publishing probate inventories of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries providing examples of words for household goods which predated the earliest known references by hundreds of years. It is most gratifying to find that records volumes like *The Wigginton Constable's Book* (B.H.S. 11, 1971), *Banbury Wills and Inventories, 1591-1650* (B.H.S. 13, 14, 1985, 1976) and *Household and Farm Inventories in Oxfordshire, 1550-1590* (Oxon. R.S. 44, 1965) are being used to such effect.

At a time of petrol crisis and on a wet autumnal evening, the sizeable audience showed their interest in a subject outside the Society's usual remit. They were well rewarded with an entertaining but scholarly talk – when we use a dictionary in the future it will be with greater understanding and respect.

Thursday 12th October 2000.

Flora Thompson – Christine Bloxham

Lark Rise to Candleford must be one of the most famous accounts ever published of rural life in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Flora's early life was spent in a dreary hamlet called Juniper Hill, just in Oxfordshire but close to Brackley. When she was older she worked in other villages in the Bicester area. Banbury itself was an occasionally-visited treat.

Flora slightly disguised most of the people and places. Christine Bloxham, with great literary and historical perseverance, has identified not only the places

but also, through tracking down relatives, most of the actual people who were such characters in these obscure rural settings.

There is no need to comment in any detail on the talk, as it is all (and much more) in Christine's book *The World of Flora Thompson* (Robert Dugdale, Oxford, 1998. viii, 232 pp., £9.95). Suffice it to say that whether it was Flora or Christine who was the attraction, we had an attendance of approaching fifty, which included several from some distance and at least one who had associations with Flora Thompson or her family.

Thursday 9th November 2000.

***Oxfordshire Maps* – John Leighfield**

Our audience was privileged to see a portion of one of the best private map collections in Oxfordshire. In support of this display, John Leighfield gave an erudite account of the evolving skills in cartography.

Little appears to have emerged before about 1570, so great importance attaches to a map of 1330 which became a basis for Oxfordshire estate compilations. These really established surveying as a profession. Today they have to be sought in Oxford University college ownership.

Christopher Saxton, a redoubtable Yorkshireman, revolutionised mapping as a result of his six years of survey work throughout England and Wales. This involved engravings on copper plates. Saxton's regional atlases appeared from 1579 but it was not until 1749 that roads were added in any of the counties.

Early in the seventeenth century Camden's *Britannia* appeared and this was the opportunity to reproduce Saxton's maps on a smaller scale. Indeed the influence of that Yorkshire-born cartographer continued on into the era of Speed and his decorative maps. For originality it was necessary to look across the North Sea to the Netherlands. There people like Van Langarlen were the Dutch masters.

Fortune rests very much with our county in that Dr Robert Plot published his *Natural History of Oxford-shire* in 1705, with a map. Intended to be nationwide, the only other county actually published was Staffordshire.

Further names continued to illuminate the cartographic scene, notably Kitchen and Bowen. Perhaps the most important, and certainly our speaker's favourite, was Richard Davis of Lewknor, whose 1797 two miles to the inch county map shows roads, fields (inclosed or not) and even houses.

They paved the way for the Ordnance Survey whose early achievements were in competitive vein. By the time their day had arrived, people of the nineteenth century could rightly look back on some very notable beacons of excellence.

Book Reviews

Eighty Years A CLAYDONIAN and Random Lines and Verses, by Andrew F. Fox (vi, 114pp., illustrated). Published 1999 by the author, Butlin Farm, Claydon, Banbury OX171EP. On sale at The Bygones Museum (Butlin Farm), £6.00, or by post, £7.20.

Andrew Fox is a true Oxfordshire gentleman who has made every effort to communicate without offending his fellow parishioners: a difficult feat, as anyone gathering material to produce a book of the area they dwell in will appreciate; more so if you have achieved that rare state of having been born and worked all your life in the same village. *Eighty Years a Claydonian* is therefore a very apt title.

This is not a history of Claydon so much as one man's active participation in a community. Over the years the village has seen many changes 'not all for the better and not all for the worse'. However 'providing you want to live a country life, as country people...' [you must leave] 'the town life behind you.' The book is about country life. Throughout Mr Fox appears to be speaking to the reader, so that during the conducted tour round the village just enough information is given to hold the attention, but not enough to slow your progress. Any additions come later. The book could act as an introduction to the Bygones Museum or as a memento of an excellent day out. Yet it is a great deal more than this.

Farming was the backbone of the community and most trades were related to it. The market town of Banbury was essential to the agricultural hinterland around, especially before the war. So important were the trades there that Mr Fox's museum has over the last decade been rescuing many shop fittings and equipment to make a central area in the museum at Butlin's Farm, adding to the original farm tools and equipment on display. The book is itself an historical record, preserving the process and revealing the dedication which brought all this about.

Mr Fox begins briefly with his time at school, but lengthens his stride to take us through the farming year. He tells of the shepherd giving weak lambs 'a few spots of whiskey' to put them on their way, but not until it had first been tested! Anyone who has lived, worked on, or stayed near a farm, will enjoy the atmosphere created and even perhaps remember blisters from the pitchfork or the temperamental bailer. However not all

progress felt like an improvement, for 'their Fordson tractor is not as intelligent as the horse.'

There may be other readers who feel there was a great deal of oral history the author is holding back on in case he bores the reader. The opposite is true. He asks forgiveness 'if I romp a bit' but by then we are delighted to receive information so easily lost. Besides, by this time Mr Fox has an attentive audience who can imagine the frustration of having carefully completed the first part of the book, only to find other relevant tales pressing to be told. Please, Mr Fox, continue to type them up to add to future editions of this excellent book. Village life does not stay tidily in neat sections, everything is intertwined, and yet the author has obviously had years of experience in keeping an audience interested by honing it down to an acceptable length.

The book beautifully conveys the importance of preserving the worktools. The museum has a loyal band of volunteers to help repair and house the steam engines. From a tour of the old buildings it is obvious that a great deal of hard work and thought has gone into making the most of the display areas.

The author has written and collected many poems which once would have been part of an evening's entertainment. At these one of the local bards would be persuaded to entertain those present. Others were perhaps written for the church magazine, or have been saved to provide a comment on the times. Wherever and whatever the occasion, they are preserved for the readers of this book to enjoy.

Just one grouse for those of us who so easily forget whereabouts in the book they found a particular gem: an index would have been a bonus. Also may I make a suggestion, without offence, and ask Andrew Fox, or his daughter Mrs Catherine Bodily (the present owner of the Bygones Museum), to make space, if they have not already done so, for a collection of maps of the parish (photocopying the old ones) and documents of importance (such as the Tithe and Enclosure Awards), which could help to show the area of each farm, with their field names, as well as the sites of all the older properties, not forgetting the cattle hovels.

Pamela Keegan

Pamela Keegan has written extensively on the history of Cropredy. *The Town of Cropredy 1570-1640* and four books about Cropredy (edited by her for the Cropredy Historical Society) are available on her website (but no copies for sale): <http://www/mewslade.freemove.co.uk>

The Changing Faces of Easington, by Barry Davis and Brian Little (96pp., lavishly illustrated). Witney: Robert Boyd Publications, 2000 (Series No. 45), £9.50 (available from bookshops or direct from R.B.P., 260 Colwell Drive, Witney OX8 7LW – add £1.50 for p&p).

This is the third of the ‘Changing Faces’ series written by our Chairman, Brian Little, and this time he is joined by Barry Davis, whose credentials are clear from photographs on pages 43 (1959) and 52 (1973).

The style of the series is now well established: mainly photographs with as knowledgeable as possible captions and linking text – all depending on what and whom the authors have managed to locate. They are mostly twentieth century reminiscences, and they do a jolly good job of recording what many people don’t realise *is* history. In the Introduction it is stated that this ‘is a first book’, so it is clearly hoped that further photos and memories will surface as a result.

I’m not sure how comforting or disturbing it is to realise how one is oneself part of this history. Brian and I have been around in Banbury for over forty years, Barry obviously even longer. It’s O.K. seeing photos of the 1920s and 1930s – but when they’re from the 1960s and 1970s (or even later), it gives one pause. Damn it, *I* was running a Scottish Country Dancing Club at the Easington Hotel around 1960!

Quite apart from that, I have a soft spot for Easington, for it was in Horton View that Ted Brinkworth lived when our Society was founded – so I was glad he gets mentioned (for giving a lift to a schoolgirl on the crossbar of his bicycle, page 19 – probably in our present p.c. days this would be considered a criminal offence, just as much as his reputation as ‘Whacker’ Brinkworth mentioned a few issues back!).

By their very nature, books in this series tend not to acknowledge sources of illustrations, and I’m sure that most of their owners would not wish this. However those that appear to come from historical archives are in a different category. The original of the 1765 map of Easington (made for John Barber) must be in the Risley collection in the Bodleian Library; but where do the letter and sale notice on pp. 9-11 come from?

I was sorry too that the oldest building in Easington, Easington House and Farm on the Oxford Road (now a hotel) was dismissed with a photograph showing only its roof. There is a room-by-room description of this house as it was in 1616, from the probate inventory of Margaret Hawthaine, widow, a daughter of Laurence Washington of Sulgrave. No other identifiable house in Banbury can claim one this early.

For those who want to see what Easington looked like a hundred years or so ago, the Museum has a watercolour of Easington Field by William Matthison (I know, because it belonged to my grandfather and mother, and I gave it to the Museum in 1971) – and very boring it looks, but I’m still sorry it wasn’t included – maybe in Part 2? **J.S.W.G.**

Paupers, Pupils and Prisoners – And Other Tales of Old Eydon (A5, 64pp.). Eydon Historical Research Group, vol. 2, Feb. 2000. Available from Mrs Leila Leeson, 12 Moreton Road, Eydon, Daventry, Northants. NN11 3PA (£4.00 + 50p U.K. or £1.00 overseas).

It is somewhat embarrassing (though gratifying) to find quotations from one’s review of the earlier publication displayed inside the cover. What can one find to criticise, to show one’s impartial?

Frankly, I’m not going to try. For a start, this issue is 16 pages longer. That can’t be bad. There are nine articles with seven contributors; and, as I praised before, an index. The articles are grouped under three headings. ‘Institutions’ are the poor laws, the water supply; and the school. ‘Buildings’ are ‘Before the Storm’ (not a weather devastation, but an examination of pre 20th century buildings in the village); followed by a history of the past century’s buildings; and concluding with one particular house, Cedar Cottage, of which the first documentary record is 1744, but which certainly pre-dates this. The source referencing for this article is admirable.

‘People’ has articles on the medieval lords of Eydon and a family (Brightwell/Rawlings) that emigrated to America in the later nineteenth century. But it starts with Vennesa Rigg’s ‘The Sufferings of Thomas Smallbone’. Thomas Smallbone was imprisoned as a Quaker in 1658, one of the first of those who in following years were gaoled in their thousands. What is interesting to those outside Eydon is that he was almost certainly the son of Edmund Smallbone of Banbury, baptised in 1609. Whilst between 1611 and 1629 Edmund appears in the official Corporation records to have been amongst Banbury’s hierarchy (Tithingman, Constable, Burgess), the ‘Bawdy Court’ proceedings reveal another aspect, with constant indictments for ‘incontinence’ with Mary wife of William Bentley. It would be a gross libel to suggest that such sexual irregularities were related to religious unorthodoxy, but it is worth noting that Thomas’s aunt, his mother’s sister Elizabeth Eden, had married Richard Vivers, whose son Edward (first cousin of Thomas Smallbone) was one of Banbury’s first, and leading, Quakers. **J.S.W.G.**

Book Notices

In addition to the books reviewed on preceding pages, we have received several others which we expect to review in our next issue, but meanwhile would like to draw them to the attention of our readers.

Compton Verney: a History of the House and its Owners, edited by Robert Bearman. Shakespeare Birthplace Trust (Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon CV37 6QW), 2000. 188pp., illustrated, card covers, £14.99.

Contributors include Lord Willoughby de Broke (whose family home it was for many centuries; his ancestor John Verney, 14th baron, married a daughter of Lord North of Wroxton, and was responsible for much of the layout of the park); Dr Robert Bearman; Dr Steven Brindle; Professor Christopher Dyer; Martyn James; Dr Roland Quinault; Dr Geoffrey Tyack (who spoke on Compton Verney to the Banbury Historical Society some years ago); and Dr Philip Wise.

The English Rural Landscape, edited by Joan Thirsk. Oxford University Press, 2000. 352pp., illustrated, hard back and jacket, £30.00.

The main relevance of this important book to readers of *C&CH* is the contribution by Dr Kate Tiller on 'Hook Norton: An Open Village'. We hope to republish this in a forthcoming issue, so will not comment further. However, the book has much else to commend it to local historians, covering a wide range of areas and topics. These include, under the heading 'Panoramas', downlands, wolds, lowland vales, woodlands in western and lowland England, marshes, fenlands, moorlands, common land and frontier valleys. Under 'Cameos of landscape', in addition to Hook Norton, we have Stonor, at the opposite end of our county, Eccleshall in Staffordshire (from our good friend Margaret Spufford), Staintondale in north Yorkshire; and Fen Drayton in Cambridgeshire.

A Country Brewery: Hook Norton 1849-1999. The story of a family brewing tradition, published to mark its 150th anniversary, by David Eddershaw. The Hook Norton Brewery Company Limited, 1999. x, 124pp. Price not shown.

We had a memorable A.G.M. at the Brewery earlier this year. This book will enhance our members' memories of that day.

Hook Norton 2000 AD: The Millennium Book. 80pp, £9.50 + £1 p&p.

A book of photographs and rather inadequate captions.

BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Banbury Historical Society was founded in 1957 to encourage interest in the history of the town of Banbury and neighbouring parts of Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The magazine *Cake and Cockhorse* is issued to members three times a year. This includes illustrated articles based on original local historical research, as well as recording the Society's activities. Well over a hundred issues and some three hundred articles have been published. Most back issues are still available and out-of-print issues can if required be photocopied.

Records series:

Wigginton Constables' Books 1691-1836 (vol. 11, with Phillimore).

Banbury Wills and Inventories 1591-1650, 2 parts (vols. 13, 14).

Victorian Banbury, by Barrie Trinder (vol. 19, with Phillimore).

Aynho. A Northamptonshire Village, by Nicholas Cooper (vol. 20).

Banbury Gaol Records, ed. Penelope Renold (vol. 21).

Banbury Baptism and Burial Registers, 1813-1838 (vol. 22).

Oxfordshire and North Berkshire Protestation Returns and Tax Assessments 1641-1642 (vol. 24).

Adderbury. A Thousand years of History, by Nicholas Allen (vol. 25, with Phillimore – now reprinted).

The 'Bawdy Court' of Banbury: The Act Book of the Peculiar Court of Banbury and Cropredy 1625-38, ed. R.K. Gilkes (vol. 26).

Current prices, and availability of other back volumes, from the Hon. Secretary, c/o Banbury Museum.

In preparation:

Turnpike Roads to Banbury, by Alan Rosevear.

Selections from the *Diaries of William Cotton Risley, Vicar of Deddington 1836-1848*, ed. G.W. Smedley-Stevenson.

King's Sutton Churchwardens' Accounts 1636-1700, ed. Paul Hayter.

Banbury Chapbooks, by Dr Leo John de Freitas.

The Society is always interested to receive suggestions of records suitable for publication, backed by offers of help with transcription, editing and indexing.

Meetings are held during the autumn and winter, normally at 7.30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month, at the North Oxfordshire College, Broughton Road, Banbury. Talks are given by invited lecturers on general and local historical, archaeological and architectural subjects. Excursions are arranged in the spring and summer, and the A.G.M. is usually held at a local country house.

Membership of the Society is open to all, no proposer being needed. The annual subscription is **£10.00** including any records volumes published, or **£7.50** if these are not required; overseas membership, **£12.00**.

