

The chapters are allocated according to date range, so the second chapter covers the medieval period from 1100-1500, emphasizing the pervading influence of the bishopric of Lincoln over Banbury. The town, formerly presumably a minor river-crossing settlement, was created by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln from 1123 to 1148; he rebuilt the church, authorised a market place and raised the castle. The development of the town is thus put into the national context. There is interesting information about the development around the market place (apparently Cuttle Brook, which formed a boundary to the market place, was described by archaeologists as three metres wide and three metres deep, though in medieval times this would have been three yards wide and deep!) and about the development of Grimsbury, which has often been neglected in the past.

It was during the Tudor period that the town came under secular rather than religious control, and was given its first formal charter by Queen Mary in 1554 [26 January 1553/4]. Religious turmoil led, around 1600, to the destruction of the town's medieval crosses, which are described; but the fascinating story of the destruction of the main cross in the market place is glossed over, and there is no mention of the dispute it caused between the Puritans and traditionalists, and how their case was taken to Star Chamber and the town told to rebuild the cross (which it ignored for three centuries). The percentages of different trades in the town in the sixteenth century are given, when thirty-four percent of men in the town were leatherworkers; it would have been useful to see this theme carried through into later centuries. Fascinating information has been culled from local wills and inventories (these, 1590-1650, have been published as Records Volumes 14 and 15 of the Banbury Historical Society).

The chapter on the seventeenth century details changes in the town's boundaries and in the Corporation under a new charter of 1608. Puritanism became predominant in the town – Brian has used the story about the Puritan hanging his cat on a Monday for committing the crime of killing a mouse on the Sunday, but has not mentioned the equally lovely story in Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* of the baker, Zeal-of-the-land-Busy (said to have been based on Banbury baker Richard Busby) who stopped baking Banbury Cakes because they were served at parties such as bride ales. In fact there are scant references in the book to the cakes synonymous with Banbury.

One of the snags of a chronological arrangement is the hazard of either repeating information about the same subject in different chapters, or omitting bits when a subject is more relevant in one place. This has happened to the story of the plush industry, one of the most important trades in the town, which does not rate a mention at all in the chapter on the eighteenth century, although it was well established by then, and supported many spinners and weavers working in surrounding villages. Even in the nineteenth century chapter there is no reference to the wonderful uses to which plush was put, or to its wider use