

Readers of *C&CH* will naturally be mainly interested in 'our' branch line, which ran from the junction at King's Sutton on the Banbury-Oxford line, through Adderbury, Bloxham, Hook Norton and Chipping Norton to Kingham and thence over the Cotswolds to Cheltenham. The passenger service lasted from the opening of the line in 1887 to 1951, and indeed from 1907 to the outbreak of war in 1939 an express train (the 'Ports to Ports') ran once a day over it.

The book contains pictures of most of the Oxfordshire stations on the line, including three well-known ones of Chipping Norton (thanks to the Packer family) and two of Hook Norton, but none of the express, which one caption wrongly states was at one time worked by locomotives of the well known 'Castle' class. There is also some duplication. We could have foregone one of the two photographs of the shunting accident at Chipping Norton on 23rd May 1907, exciting though it obviously was to the local schoolboys, and likewise one of the two of Bletchington [*sic*] station on what seems to have been an indescribably murky day in the same year.

There are no pictures of tunnels at Chipping Norton or Hook Norton, the fine pair of viaducts or the extensive ironstone railways at the latter place, or the ironstone system which ended at Alkerton (now the local tip). Those with a deeper interest in the Banbury-Cheltenham Railway may wish to invest in the splendid 3-volume history now being published by Wild Swan Publications, of which two volumes have appeared – but they will also need much deeper pockets, and will not get much change from a hundred pounds.

Meanwhile the present paperback is good value as a reminder of the days when our railways were well patronised and proudly staffed.

Alan Donaldson

Foul Deeds and Suspicious Deaths Around Oxfordshire, Carl Boardman (card covered, 176pp). ISBN 1 903425 56 5. Wharncliffe Books/Pen & Sword Books (47 Church St., Barnsley, S. Yorks. S70 2AS). 2004. £9.99.

The only specifically Banbury item here is the account of the Kalabergo murder of 1851. The story has been told many times, with E.R Lester (duly acknowledged) devoting a whole book to it, somewhat fictionalised, in 1975. Nevertheless, as one would expect from Carl, it reads well. That doesn't excuse captioning a photograph of the High Street with the well-known three-gabled Vivers buildings prominent as being 'Butchers Row'.

The other 'Banburyshire' item is the sad affair of Eliza Nicholls, who in December 1865 gave birth to an illegitimate child at her mother's house at Hempton near Deddington, the baby being found dead 36 hours later. Poor Eliza quickly confessed to having strangled the child. She was accused of infanticide, but at her trial it is interesting to see that compassion ruled the day, with the prosecution doing its best to mitigate the circumstances. In the event Eliza was sentenced 'only' to twelve months imprisonment with hard labour. I eagerly