

The sheep-pen dispute; respectability

In 1656 there was a notable disagreement between the Corporation and various Banbury inhabitants, mainly living in Sheep Street, over an attempt to move the weekly sheep market from the road to a municipally-owned piece of land elsewhere. The Sheep Street residents had been accustomed to put out pens for the sheep, and understandably resented the arbitrary ending of the useful income they thus earned. It came to a head in a minor riot, and the subsequent court case with numerous depositions.

Amongst the deponents were Philip Cave, aged 58, a brasier and churchwarden; Richard Croker, father and grandfather of Richard (1702), who had stalls and standings outside his house; Martin Kenning, a freemason; Henry Smith, Justice of the Peace, a householder with pens, whose accounts when Mayor in 1664-5 included 17s. 'by which he was out of purse for the sheep 1688), a Burgess; and William Wheatley, a saddler and constable aged 33. All had sons who were apprenticed to London livery companies.

Another indication of respectability was the signing of a petition or oath of loyalty. As early as 1590 Thomas Clements, father of John (1607), was one of many supporting Thomas Brasbridge, who had been deprived of his living as vicar of Banbury.

A century later, after an attempt had been made on the life of William III, the Association Oath Roll was subscribed to in 1695 by many of Banbury's adult male inhabitants – over 250, most of them actual signatures, an impressive display of literacy in the town. As well as members of the Corporation itself, other much humbler fathers of apprentices signed: John Awsten, William Gulliver, Richard Shaw, Thomas Collins, Thomas Bolds, William Usher, Richard Welford, John Lamprey and George Thorpe.

Provision for apprenticing the poor

However, it was not only men of substance whose sons were apprenticed to London livery companies. Samuel Tustian (1669) and John Luckock (1670) were described as 'poor' at their burial (admittedly in 1705 for the latter). Simon Richards, father of Thomas (1693), was a labourer who had actually died nine years before blacksmiths' indentures were taken out. The Corporation had funds available for charitable uses, and providing a trade for a fatherless boy might be one of them.

Erratum: *Cake & Cockhorse*, vol. 17, p. 26. To replace para 2, lines 6-8.

'by which he was out of purse for the sheep pen business'; Samuel Tustian (1669), a joiner aged 36; Edward Welchman (1688), a Burgess; and William Wheatley, a saddler and constable aged 33. All had sons who were apprenticed to London livery companies.