

Miss Dannatt, in her introduction to *Banbury Wills and Inventories* (BHS 13), is worth quoting on the subject of the cost and importance of binding a boy apprentice (though in these cases only locally). ‘George Helmedon (d.1634, no.342), although only a labourer, left 20s. to William Green, a mason’s son, “to be retained by the Overseers until he is bound prentice”. The widow Joane Borrowes (no.283) left a similar sum to Azarikam Graunte in 1627 towards placing him as an apprentice. Robert Gascoyne (d.1644, no.395) left the residue of his goods to be sold to pay for his children to be bred and placed apprentices. When Thomas Webb (no.171) died in 1616 his widow’s account included £7 spent on apprenticing their eldest son.’ The case of John Hughes is described later.

Future success – or failure

So, it has been possible to discover a certain amount about some of the fathers of these London apprentices – but what *did* happen to them, younger sons or not? Well, to start on a gloomy note, two died before or just after completing their term: Thomas Lea (1691) and William Bloxham (1713), both buried at Banbury.

William May (1669), trained as a turner, returned to Banbury where his children were being born from 1684 on – his trade, unsurprisingly, was as a turner, although in his will he described himself as a victualler. Edward Stranke (1705), apprenticed as a feltmaker, also returned to Banbury by 1715, trading appropriately as a hatter. Richard Crocker or Crockett (1702), another turner, was back marrying in Banbury by 1714, but clearly did not prosper, as even then, and thereafter, he was described as a labourer.

Of the sons of the two William Wheatl(e)y(s), a genealogical account of the family tells us that Nehemiah (1670), trained as a Turner, ‘may have settled at Emsley in Ullenhall’, the Warwickshire village where his grandfather John Whateley had lived. Nathaniel (1671), indentured to the Apothecaries, duly became established as such, at Oxford, where his son, also Nathaniel, graduated as M.A.

Probate records in the Banbury Peculiar Court for some thirty people, either parents or closely associated, were examined. Some former apprentices are just not mentioned by their probable or possible parents. Richard Southam refers in 1676 to James specifically as his ‘only son’ – if he was father of Daniel (1663), then the boy must have died. There are no references to Daniel Awsten (1676) by John Austin in 1708. Thomas Welford’s widow Ann leaves her son John the tools of a hair-cloth weaver, and legacies to her four daughters, but makes no mention of Richard (1699). Some have just disappeared.