

‘exhibited the great and beneficial results which society has every reason to expect – politically and morally – will be effected by the operation of Freehold Land Society, not forgetting to impress upon the audience the value to the individual as an investment of capital and as one of the best kinds of savings-bank, and as inducements to motives of prudence and forethought amongst the industrious classes.’⁷

In Banbury, Taylor outlined his successful launch of a Freehold Land Society in Birmingham. Its aim was to purchase land at favourable wholesale prices and to sub-divide it into lots which were available to members through a ballot.

The positive meeting was chaired by the Mayor, Edward Cobb, and concluded with the formal acceptance of the desirability of a Freehold Land Society. In proposing the motion Francis Francillon, an attorney, stressed that the organisation would be dedicated to the moral, social and political condition of the working classes.

The scheme ‘went public’ in a boxed advertisement in the *Banbury Guardian* of 10 April 1851. ‘Banbury Freehold Land Society’⁸ had been enrolled on 27 March as ‘The Banbury Co-operative Benefit Building Society.’ In historical context, this was one month before the opening of The Great Exhibition in London.

The advertisement details the practical development of the process, with membership through a one shilling share, emphasising the advantages of wholesale group purchase of land and re-sale at wholesale rather than retail prices.

It also notes that the Society would operate in Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire. It is not evident that it promoted other schemes, although The Northampton Town & County Benefit Building & Freehold Land Society, with a first development surrounding Freehold Street in Northampton, had been established around 1848.⁹

The President was Banbury’s M.P., Henry William Tancred. James Cadbury (another Birmingham link?), a Quaker and Temperance leader

⁷ *Illustrated London News*: Report of meeting of the Westminster Freehold Land Society, 1850. (Online) Retrieved 7:II:2007 from <http://www.londonancestor.com/iln/freehold-property.htm>

⁸ Little, Brian: *Freehold Land Society*, manuscript note of article (undated) which subsequently appeared in the *Banbury Guardian* and other notes.

⁹ Utopia Britannica : British Utopian Experiments 1325-1945: Northamptonshire (Online) Retrieved 7:II:2007 from <http://www.utopia-britannica.org.uk/pages/NORTHANTS.htm>