

they question the viewpoint alleged by the artist – see the comment on what could really be seen in the view of St Mary’s (p.53) or the interpretation of the circumstances of the family placed artistically by Rowlandson in the foreground of his ‘View near Banbury, 1808’ (p.120). The introduction makes this point forcibly, pointing out that the picture of ‘The Cross’ (p.62) records an 1859 official opening which never actually took place. While many illustrations have been taken from the institutions above named other sources have also been trawled, some of which are less familiar; the engraving of the public swimming baths constructed by Thomas Draper in 1855 (p 119) is a case in point, originally published in *The Builder*, or the plan and elevation of St Mary’s church from *The Building News* of 1896. Even where they have been published in other local articles or books (and this is always meticulously recorded) it is helpful to have them placed in context and adjacent to other relevant material. The illustrations are clear and well printed, and the juxta-position of views of the same place by different artists entices the reader into examining details. The only drawback to this approach is the consequent need to refer to earlier or later pages, but that is probably inevitable given the size of the book and its complicated layout which on the whole works very well.

The reader is taken along a route and can follow the maps on the endpapers to verify locations. The tone of the accompanying text is cheerful and slightly provocative – ‘why were there three [town halls] before [the present one]?’ This is a book which is intended to amuse and engage its readers with comment which, while scholarly, is not arid. The compilers pull no punches about their feelings relating to the destruction of Banbury and its buildings by successive town councils and point out that ‘First you must realise that Banburians love *demolishing* things, but sometimes replace them’ (p.13). If they have done nothing more they have drawn attention to the importance of Banbury’s buildings both present and past in a most engaging way. It is to be hoped that the book will add to the pressure to avoid wanton destruction of a familiar and attractive town with much still remaining of its market status. It is highly recommended for all those who know Banbury and indeed, for those who are new to the town; what better introduction could be wanted?

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