

Chipping Norton: The Story of a Market Town, David Eddershaw, 136pp., illustrated. Poundstone Press (ISBN 10 0955241006), 2006. £9.99 + £2 p&p from Jaffe & Neale, 1 Middle Row, Chipping Norton, Oxon. OX7 5NH.

The author is well known to many Oxfordshire historians, having been on the staff of the County Museum service for 37 years and a frequent speaker at local historical events, one of the last before retirement at the end of 2001 being to ourselves. This history was drawn to our attention at the talk in January on Chipping Norton probate inventories. It should be acquired by anyone with interest in the town's past. Written in David's easy style familiar from his lectures, I found it absorbing and devoured it almost at a sitting. This undoubtedly is how local history should be written.

Not many of us, I imagine, realise that Chipping Norton had a castle. At least its remains survive (unlike Banbury's) as bumps in a field near the church. The town acquired a charter in 1606/7, granting it borough status with two Bailiffs and twelve burgesses, just sixteen months before Banbury acquired its second charter, by which *our* Bailiff was replaced by a Mayor. James I was lavish in granting titles to individuals, usually in return for financial benefit to the Crown, and so, it seems, it was with town charters. Chipping Norton's grant was essential to free the townsfolk from a new and exploitative lord of the manor.

The nineteenth century was dominated by the Bliss family and its tweed mills, much as Bernhard Samuelson brought modern industry to Banbury. There are many other comparisons that can be made between our neighbouring towns.

This brings me to one of my criticisms: the index. It is that misleading aid, (silently) selective. Individuals' names are only included if they are considered important. For instance, around 1448 six men collected local taxes, but only two are indexed, as they occur in other roles. Similar examples proliferate. Naturally I looked up Banbury, to find no references. In fact, understandably, our town is mentioned several times, some in passing but others reflecting what influence if any, particularly in markets and hinterland, they had on each other. The book seems to be written on the assumption that readers are *only* interested in the town, not on its interaction with other places near and far. "No man is an island." For researchers, inclusion of *all* personal and place names is essential.

Apart from a reference to the group transcribing inventories, no mention or encouragement is given to such on-going research. A brief list of "Original sources" is given alphabetically, but only knowledgeable local historians will understand their importance (see my note on page 176, above. In the description of the suppression of the chantries, pp.39-41, was ORS 1 consulted?). These would have been much more effectively broken up and placed at the ends of relevant chapters; as would the bibliography.

Finally, for one who is unfamiliar with the town, the lack of an adequate, clearly drawn map, was frustrating. Two appear as illustrations (Enclosure, 1770 and Ordnance Survey, 1890s), but murkily, much reduced with excessive detail.

Nevertheless, do get the book.

J.G.