

## THE SIMMONDS FAMILY IN BANBURY

*Rodney Lucas*

Relaxing in a holiday cottage in the Spring, my friend invited me to look through the *Genealogists' Magazines* he had taken, to catch up on his reading. By chance I picked up the December 2007 issue, which started a chain of events. In it I found the article about Banbury and bells immediately started to ring. Both the article and the cover had pictures of the junction of Parsons Street with North Bar Street, in both of which I knew some of my wife's relatives had had businesses. In the interest of dating the cover picture I wrote to the editor, who published my letter. This was seen by Jeremy Gibson who suggested that I write this article.

Thomas (Tom) Simmonds was not native to Oxfordshire; he was born in Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire in about 1829. I next find him in the 1851 census (goodness knows where he was in 1841) lodging in Union Street, Marylebone, and working as a ladies' shoemaker. There he met Ellen Savage, working as a servant in Weymouth Street, Marylebone. There are many ways in which they could have met; I like to think he made shoes for her or her mistress. They married in July 1851 in St. Anne's, Westminster. Ellen was of similar age to Tom and had been born in Banbury. In 1841, at the reported age of 12 (later censuses suggest she may actually have been 14), she was working as a servant to Mrs Bays, a confectioner in High Street, Banbury. Doubtless Ellen influenced the couple's decision to move to the area of her birth.

That move took place some time between 1853, when their second child was born in London, and 1858 when the birth of their third was registered in Banbury. 1861 sees the family living in East Street, Grimsbury, which was at that time part of Northamptonshire. Tom's occupation was described by that delightful old word, cordwainer. They probably stayed in Grimsbury until after the birth of their seventh child, whose birth certificate shows him to have been born there in August 1865. At this stage Tom seems to have been employed rather than having his own business since he was described as "cordwainer journeyman". Two years later, the eighth child was born in Banbury, indicating that by then the family had probably moved to the address found in the 1871 census, Castle Gardens, Banbury.