

***Business and trade; 300 years of commerce in Steeple Aston.*** Steeple Aston Village Archive, 54pp. Numerous illustrations. £6.00, available from SAVA Chairman Martin Lipson, West Grange, Grange Park, Steeple Aston OX25 4SR, tel. 01869 347046

*Business and Trade* is a most attractive booklet covering many village activities during the last 300 years including those connected with the canal and quarries as well as the more common village occupations such as the undertakers, the bakers and the publicans. Other occupations included many of the usual requirements of a community such as coal delivery, brick making and the delivery of services including goods carrying, transport by horse and bus and the delivery of letters. Not surprisingly the majority of the entries are for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries since earlier businesses were rarely recorded in detail. And many enterprises were small and ephemeral, being family businesses which frequently closed down when the main worker either retired or died. Additionally, many inhabitants sold sweets, vegetables or beer from their homes to supplement meagre incomes but could hardly be described as shops. However, many recent incomers to the village and their contributions as publicans, guitar makers or village shop owners are noted, ensuring that the record is up to date. The list of occupations at the back of the book, taken from various sources, indicates the changes over the past two centuries from what was preponderantly a farming community to a service-based village with many different occupations ranging from decorators to travel agents but few farmers.

The layout of the booklet is attractive and it is very well-illustrated with photographs of both people and places; it is a pity that there is no map to indicate the location of those who contributed so much to the village. Steeple Aston inhabitants will no doubt be able to work out what was where but for those with less knowledge of the area it would have been helpful. It is also a pity that no sources are cited for the information, making it difficult to ascertain where, for example, the lists of occupations come from and how one source relates to another. This unfortunately limits the value of the booklet for comparison against other village research which would build up a picture of not only Steeple Aston but other similar communities in north Oxfordshire. It also needs information about price and availability on the cover if it is to attract a wider audience but that, all said, the Steeple Aston Village Archive must be congratulated on producing an interesting and attractive booklet which many other communities would envy.

**Helen Forde**

This is the last issue of Volume 17. Regrettably it has not been possible (at least at present) to compile any indexes, although a Table of Contents is being provided. We expect to digitise this volume (as with earlier volumes) and this will in due course be made available on our website. **Ed.**