

by the middle of the nineteenth century,²⁰ it had entirely gone, with “latter-made” cheese being the last to disappear.

It is likely that the demise of Banbury Cheese manufacture, which was essentially a cottage industry, was a direct consequence of the Enclosure Acts of the late 1700s. The Tithe records for Cropredy a century and a half earlier show that many households were allowed to graze two cows on common land.²¹ If the commoner could not afford to pay for the land once it had been enclosed – as frequently occurred – the cows had to go, and the new landowner might well prefer sheep to cattle.

Perhaps some local entrepreneur, who understands the art and technology of cheese-making, may one day revive this historic product – who knows? It is sad to have lost touch with a tradition which lasted over four centuries.

The 15th /16th Century Recipe for Banbury Cheese²² A Modern Transcription²³

Take a thin cheese vat, and hot milk as it comes from the cow. And run it forth withal in summer time. And knead your curds but once. And knead them not too small, but break them once with your hands. And in summer time salt the curds nothing but let the cheese lie 3 days unsalted. And then salt them. And lay one upon another but not too much salt. And so shall they gather butter. And in winter time in likewise, but then hot your milk. And salt your curds for then it will gather butter of itself. Take the wrung whey of the same milk and let it stand a day or two till it have a cream and it shall make as good butter as any other.

(To “Break” means to reduce the lumpy curd to an even mass, and a “Vat”, in this sense, means any kind of bowl.)

²⁰ A Beesley, *A History of Banbury* (1841), pp.567–8.

²¹ Pamela Keegan, *The Town of Cropredy 1570 – 1640*.

²² Sloane Collection. As fn.15.

²³ *Cake & Cockhorse* 4.7 (Spring 1970).