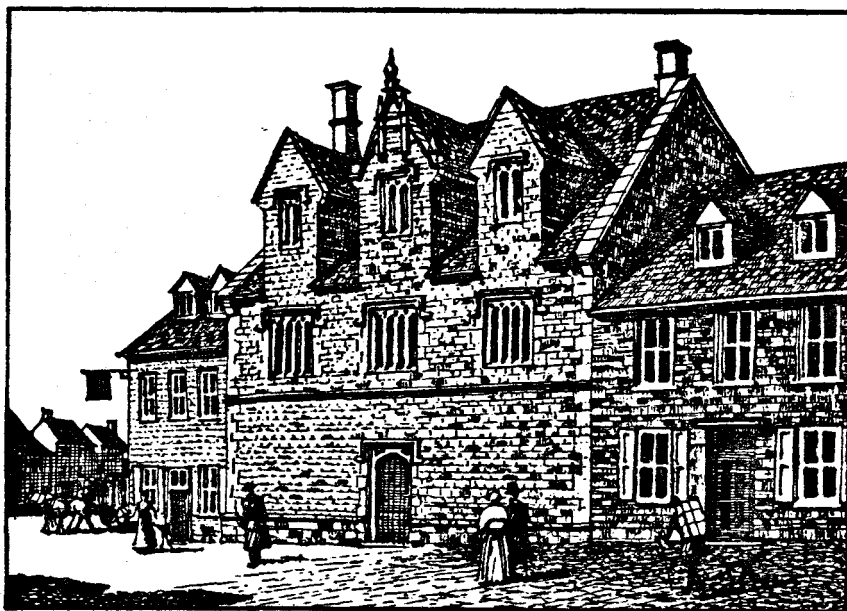


CAKE & COCKHORSE

The Magazine of the Banbury Historical Society



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CAKE AND COCKHORSE

* * * *

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A NORTH OXFORDSHIRE PARISH AND ITS POOR: WIGGINTON, 1730 - 1830

1830 was the year of the Labourers' Revolt, the last uprising of the English peasantry. The object of this paper is to examine the growth of the problem of rural poverty and distress which lay behind the 1830 outbreak, as illustrated by the accounts of the Overseers of the Poor in a typical small Oxfordshire village, Wigginton, during the preceding hundred years. The picture that emerges of the effects upon the rural workers of the agricultural revolution which the country underwent in this period is indeed a grim one. By the 1820s Wigginton, like so many other rural parishes, found itself confronted with a problem of poor relief with which the traditional organisation was quite incapable of coping. In some villages the benevolence of squire or parson might do something to soften the blows of poverty sustained by the cottagers, but in Wigginton there was no such charitable aid. There was no resident squire, no great house from the kitchens of which a dole of soup might be expected, and usually no resident rector. Such relief as the Wigginton poor could expect would have to be that afforded by the poor rate - and nothing more.

In the 18th century the organisation of poor relief was still based upon the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 by which every parish was made responsible for its own poor. The aged and impotent poor were to be maintained by parish relief, while the able-bodied were to be provided with work by the parish if they were unable to find adequate private employment. The penalty for refusal to work for the parish was imprisonment and whipping. The funds with which to apply these principles were raised by a poor rate assessed on the lands and properties within the parish, and the sums so raised were administered by the annually elected Overseers of the Poor. This office, like those of churchwarden, highway surveyor and constable, rotated amongst the farmers or other more substantial inhabitants of the parish.

Since these were the very men upon whom the burden of the poor rate chiefly fell, they were naturally concerned to keep the relief given to as low a figure as possible. Nevertheless, in the earlier 18th century, when the burden was still of manageable proportions, the Wigginton accounts reveal a certain haphazard humanity which disappears in later years when the numbers of people seeking relief had vastly increased. There is a world of difference, for instance, between the payment of 1s. 6d. in 1720 "for ale for the neighbours that met at John Payne's to attain for him a house" and the mechanical disbursements of meagre monetary relief a century later. So long as communal farming survived, the sense of communal life and communal responsibility in all its aspects remained a living thing. It was different later when the hedges went up.

Until the latter part of the 18th century money payments direct to the poor were comparatively rare, and were made only in special cases to the old and impotent. Old women usually received 1s. a week, old men (presumably with

wives) 2s. a week. Help was often given in kind. There are repeated entries in the accounts of payments for clothes: to people like one Richard Smith, who became so regular a recipient of the parish's charity through the years that the Overseers eventually referred to him in their accounts simply as "old Dick". When "old Dick" became incapable of looking after himself the parish paid an old woman, Ann French, to board him. The provision of food in cases of individual emergency was not infrequent. Fuel was also sometimes supplied: usually bundles of furze from the Heath, though coal made its appearance after the enclosure of the common land in the 1790s.

There are numerous examples in the 18th century accounts of the parish paying for repairs to houses occupied by the poor. In 1726 we find £2. 18s. being paid to Robert Cleaver, the village mason, for work at William Webb's house, while John Hartlet received £2. 15s. for other work on it (presumably carpentering) and "old French" got 2s. 9d. for thatching it. Inevitably, each of these worthies had also to be given 1s. 6d. "for drink" to encourage them in their labours. On occasion the parish might even extend its charity to the provision of furniture. In 1758 it paid 2s. 9d. to Thomas Cox, the carpenter, for a bedstead for Joannah Blunt (an impoverished descendant of the 17th century Lords of the Manor), and bedclothes were also sometimes bought. On one occasion we find the parish footing the bill for the division of a cottage occupied by a character referred to as "Bold Robin" in order to accommodate another man who had been rendered homeless: in 1776 the Overseers "gave to Bold Robin for Cheyney to come into his house, 6s.; for a lock for Bold Robin's door, 8d.; paid Cox for making a partition in Bold Robin's house, 9s. 6d."

In cases of illness small luxuries might be provided: sugar and even wine. But it is significant of the circumstances in which alone these comforts were forthcoming that such entries in the accounts are usually followed soon by another "for a shroud". In cases of illness also the parish had to pay the doctor's bill, and the Overseers sometimes had to go considerable distances to fetch a surgeon or apothecary for the poor. In 1773 there is an entry: "Paid the Campden doctor for Tom Geedin, 14s. 6d." Later a standing agreement seems to have been made for the services of a particular medical man, and his bill was paid yearly. In 1789 it amounted to £2. 9s. 5d. By the 1820s the parish had begun to subscribe 2½ guineas each year to the Radcliffe Infirmary at Oxford in order to secure the right of admission there of any parish paupers who were seriously ill. Nursing and lesser medical attentions were entrusted to old women of the village. In 1720 6d. was "paid to Ann Summerton for bleeding Richard Smith", and in 1757 1s. "paid Mary Webb for waiting on and washing for Joannah Blunt when not well".

When eventually the pauper succumbed, despite or because of these attentions, the Overseers had to bury him or her. When Thomas Baker died in 1734 the bill came to less than £1: "Paid for a coffin, 10s.; Paid to Sarah Newell, helping to lay him out, 1s.; Paid to Sarah Newell, helping to make affidavit (that he was buried in a woollen shroud as required by Act of Parliament), 6d.; Paid for sitting up with him and laying out, 5s.; Paid for ale at the burial, 1s.; Paid for ringing the bell and digging the grave, 1s. 4d."

All this relief was extended, however, only to those who could not help themselves: the very old, the very young, the sick and the dead. In the case of the able-bodied poor the parish tried, in conformity with the spirit of the Elizabethan Poor Law, simply to provide work by which the paupers could earn some sort of a living, however pitiful it might be. During the greater part of the 18th century this took the form of occasional work on the land or on the parish roads. There are payments for cow-keeping, bird-scaring, breaking stones, picking up stones from the fallow, ditching, shovelling snow from the streets in a hard winter.

The women were employed in making or repairing clothes for aged or impotent paupers, and in 1754 we find the parish paying for repairs to one woman's spinning wheel.

The picture of parish poverty becomes more grim as we approach the 19th century; but before turning to these later developments mention must be made of two other aspects of poor relief in the 18th century which are fully illustrated in the surviving Wigginton records. The first of these was the enforcement of the law of settlement. Since each parish was responsible for its own poor (that is for those who had either been born there or had become legally settled there by obtaining permanent employment), every effort was made to prevent the immigration of paupers from elsewhere lest they should then constitute an added burden on the rates. To prevent this from happening the law provided that a parish's Overseers could, with the consent of two Justices of the Peace, deport from the parish any paupers who were not natives and compel them to return to wherever they were born or last permanently employed. The Wigginton Overseers, like their counterparts elsewhere, spared no efforts to enforce this law against any poor strangers in their midst, and their accounts contain repeated references to expenses incurred in carrying paupers before Justices to be examined as to their place of origin. A large bundle of "settlement orders" that were issued and executed following such examinations survives in the church chest. Some are orders for persons to be sent away from Wigginton to their original parishes, others are for the reception of Wiggintonians who had wandered and fallen into the clutches of Overseers elsewhere. The operation of these orders constituted one of the most brutal features of the old poor law. Only very rarely does one find the Wigginton Overseers agreeing with other parishes that paupers who had gone to such parishes, though of Wigginton origin, should be allowed to remain where they were while Wigginton paid the other Overseers for their upkeep.

A further major problem of the 18th and early 19th centuries, illustrated by the miscellaneous papers of the Wigginton collection, was that of bastard children who were liable to become a charge on the rates until they were old enough to earn their living. For this reason the Overseers made every effort always to discover the father, and here again the assistance of the local Justices of the Peace had to be invoked. The Justices, on the woman's naming the father, would make an order requiring him (and sometimes the woman as well) to make a specified contribution to the funds of the parish, out of which the child could be maintained.

As soon as the pauper child was old enough to work, the parish, if he was not otherwise provided for, would compel him to accept apprenticeship to some trade, the Overseers giving him an initial set of clothes and paying a premium to the master to whom he was to be bound. Female children were likewise bound to enter domestic service. When William Day of Wigginton was apprenticed to Timothy Goffe, tailor, of Hook Norton in 1796, at the age of 12, Goffe was paid a £10 premium by the parish and received 3s. a week for the keep of Day and of two other children apprenticed to him at the same time. This system again led to much brutality as it could so readily be exploited by unscrupulous masters or overseers.

Such then was the operation of the 18th century poor law which came, as has been said, to break down in the early years of the 19th century. Fundamentally, this breakdown sprang from the way in which, under the influence of changing agricultural and industrial conditions, the whole character and structure of society were becoming different from what had been the case in the essentially static conditions to suit which the old poor law had been evolved. The growth of poverty in Wigginton can be traced in the Overseers' accounts, particularly from the 1790s onwards, when two things especially aggravated the problem. The first of these was the enclosure of the parish in 1795. When the open fields gave place to the

enclosed farms the interests of the poor were in theory respected since the enclosure act specified that some part of the parish lands should still be set aside to provide for them. But, as one might expect under the circumstances, the farmers saw to it that the Poor's Allotment was in fact placed up on Wigginton Heath where the land was the least productive in the whole parish. Moreover, the arrangement was that, instead of the poor having any right to occupy or use the land themselves, it was let to a tenant and the rent was to be paid into the funds for poor relief. The effect on some of the humbler families was to turn their poverty into mere destitution. Previously they had at least had their share of the rights of common, however limited these might be; they could at least graze a cow on the common pasture and they could gather furze and wood from the Heath to give them some warmth in winter. Now they had nothing but what the Overseers saw fit to dole out to them from poor relief funds.

The second blow fell in the years immediately after the end of the war with France in 1815. During the war inflation had caused a steady rise in the price of bread. Now an agricultural slump set in, and, though the price of bread remained high, the farmers attempted to recoup their declining profits by cutting wages and introducing machinery which would further lessen the demand for farm labour. The years from 1815 onwards were hard indeed for the rural labouring classes, and the machine-breaking riots in many parts of the country were symptomatic of the prevailing distress.

We can trace the effects of all this upon Wigginton in the startling way in which expenditure on poor relief soared over the years. Back in 1720 the annual cost of poor relief in the parish amounted to no more than £3. 4s. 6d. But by 1779 it was £45. 10s. and by 1789 it was £78. 16s. 3d. In 1796, the year following the enclosure, it rose sharply to £129. 12s. 8½d., and four years later, in 1800, this figure had again nearly doubled, to £237. 9s. 5½d. Even these increases, however, were as nothing compared to those in the starvation times which followed the end of the war in 1815. In that year the parish spent some £278 in poor relief, but two years later this figure had again nearly doubled, rising to over £548. Two years later it was up to £650. This constituted a tremendous burden on a place as small as Wigginton, and the farmers soon found that their attempts to save their pockets by cutting wages and dismissing men were recoiling upon themselves as the Overseers' demands for higher and higher poor rates confronted them. A single rate of 6d. in the pound on the value of land produced just under £30 in Wigginton, so that when the annual bill rose to £600 the farmers were being charged at the rate of 10s. in the pound.

Obviously the old casual arrangements for poor relief in the village could not cope with so great a problem as the situation in these years of steady impoverishment presented. But the Overseers did what they could to grapple with it. As early as 1777 we find £11. 0s. 4d. being paid as "expenses building a town house": presumably a kind of parish almshouse for the impotent poor. There had indeed been some such building earlier, for in 1642 the registers mention the burial of an "almswoman in the church house", but probably this had fallen into decay by the next century. Then in 1810 a plot of ground was purchased, apparently adjacent to the church, and on this were erected a further three "tenements for the use of the poor" in 1811. The tradesmens' bills for the construction of these came to some £133, and to pay them the parish was forced for the first time to raise a loan on the security of the poor rate, borrowing £150 from Thomas Barrett, a Croughton grazier, at 5% interest per annum. Subsequently the Overseers borrowed a further £170 from the same man.

Meanwhile, in what proved a vain attempt to deal with the problem of the able-bodied poor, the parish decided in 1785 to set up a workhouse. It is interesting

evidence of the distrust which prevailed between parish and parish that no attempt was apparently made to join with neighbouring villages to establish a "union" such as was permitted by an act passed three years earlier in 1782. From the comparatively small costs involved it would seem that at Wigginton an existing building was adapted to serve the purpose. The Overseers themselves did not manage this workhouse. Instead, as was common practice at the time, they entered into an agreement with a woolcomber, who seems also to have been a publican in the village, named Thomas Wilkes. Wilkes undertook to feed and clothe the paupers according to a prescribed scale, to nurse the sick and to provide decent burial for those who died (other than by smallpox), and also to arrange for the removal from Wigginton of such paupers as might be deported under the settlement laws. In return he was to receive from the Overseers the sum of £67. 5s. a year and was himself to "have the benefit of the labour and service of the said poor persons which shall be in the said workhouse". In effect the parish was farming out its poor to the workhouse contractor who might then use them as his slaves.

Yet if the Wigginton Overseers could be harsh in their dealings with the poor, it must be admitted that they were capable of some enterprize in their efforts to cope with their problems. For not only did they anticipate municipal housing with their "parish houses" of 1811, but they seem also to have anticipated the even more modern idea of municipal trading with a view to making some money with which to ease the burden of the rates. In 1790 we find them trying to develop the sandpits on the Heath: handbills advertising the sand were printed for distribution in Banbury market and the Banbury crier was paid 6d. for proclaiming its quality. There is, however, no record that this advertising campaign met with any conspicuous success.

After the enclosure in 1795 the Poor's Allotment was at first divided. The part lying east of the Tadmorton road was used to grow furze to provide fuel for the poor, and in 1800 the accounts record a payment for the planting of furze seed. The rest of the Poor's Allotment was let to a tenant and the rent used to buy coal for the poor. The coal was purchased from a Mr. Coles or a Mr. Golby at the Castle Wharf in Banbury, and the farmers of the village lent teams of horses or oxen to draw the waggons to the village. The poor themselves were expected to pay 1d. on every hundredweight of coal they received in order to defray the tolls charged on the waggons at the turnpike gates coming out of Banbury. The rent received from the tenant of the Poor's Allotment in 1804 was only £12 a year, with which it was possible to buy 10 tons of coal. In 1810 David Sammon, one of the Overseers, tried to get a new agreement giving the tenant an allowance for a time in return for improving the land; but this was defeated by the poor themselves who preferred the bird in hand to the two in the bush. "After the tenant had entered", runs a note in the accounts, "the poor in general was so dissatisfied (that) the bargain became void, and D. Sammon from this time declined having any further to do with it." However, in 1812, with the wartime farming boom still on, the parish was able to let the allotment of £30 a year, allowing the tenant £5 a year rebate in respect of the barn which he built at a cost of £50.

All this, however, could do little to solve the rapidly growing problem of poverty in the village, and the Wigginton Overseers found themselves forced to adopt the "Speenhamland" system of outdoor relief. No parish workhouse or casual work on the roads or on the land could provide employment for the twenty or thirty families now unemployed in the village, and so the Overseers fell back on weekly doles of money distributed "on the round", as it was called, the sums being calculated according to the paupers' circumstances and size of family. This system of outdoor relief proved at Wigginton, as elsewhere, to have very unsatisfactory consequences. Not only did it discourage the idea of work when it was available, but it encouraged the idea of large families, since the more children the more money could be demanded. The birth rate soared in an unprecedented fashion: so did the

poor rate, and the housing problem became increasingly acute. The 1821 census return reported that the village contained 66 families, the total population being 291. One of the questions asked of the returning officers of the parish was: "To what cause do you attribute any remarkable difference between the number of persons in 1811 and the present number?" They answered: "We attribute the increase in population in a very great measure to the frequent and early marriages of the labouring poor; to which the plan of relieving them by head money according to the number of their respective families no doubt operated as a very great inducement, especially when the price of bread was very high; and in some respects, though not in so great a degree, to the frequency of bastardy, the laws against which operates so little as a discouragement."

1822 must have been an especially bitter year for the poor of Wigginton, because the Overseers then found themselves forced to cut the rate of outdoor relief by as much as a third. We find them writing to the Oxford Guardians of the Poor about the payment which they were sending to them in respect of a Wigginton woman who was living there. "Agreeably to your request", they wrote, "(we) have sent you the sum of £10. 16s. for the money paid by your parish to Lydia Bartlett; and as we have been making a general reduction in our weekly expenditure (we) will thank you in future to pay two shillings per week instead of three."

In 1826 the account books of the Wigginton Overseers come to an end - tantalizingly only four years before the outbreak of the Labourers' Revolt. But soon the parish Overseers themselves were to cease to exist when the 1834 Poor Law required parishes to form unions instead of acting individually, and the Wigginton workhouse and its Overseers gave place to the new union workhouse with its Board of Guardians at Banbury. All outdoor relief to the able-bodied came to an end; the pauper was now faced with the choice of the workhouse or nothing. But the most important thing about the new legislation on the poor was that it at last abandoned the outworn principle of settlement. It recognized that local populations could no longer be kept as it were imprisoned in their birthplaces. The great industrial towns were expanding and offered employment to those who would migrate to them. The poor of Wigginton, no longer wanted on the land there, were no doubt as ready as those of other impoverished country districts to make their way to Birmingham or the Black Country. The depopulation of the village began, and by the 1870s houses were lying vacant instead of being crowded with two or more families as earlier.

For those who did remain in Wigginton conditions gradually improved: not only because the pressure of population was eased but also because the social consciences of the more well-to-do elements had been awakened by the appalling sufferings witnessed in earlier years. It was a sign of the times that in 1842-43 the Rector, the Rev. John Williams, created in one of his glebe fields allotments each of which could be rented by a poor man at a yearly rental of 6d. They must have proved an immense boon in the lean years, and it was not until the 1870s that the villagers grew sufficiently prosperous to jib at a condition attached to their tenure that the tenant was liable to forfeit his allotment if he failed to appear in church every Sunday. Thus the evil days slowly passed. There were fluctuations of fortune, of course, through the 19th century: good times and hard times, according as agriculture prospered or declined. But never again was the village to know the sufferings of that terrible half-century from 1780 to 1830. With its diminished population, Wigginton sank, like the other villages of North Oxfordshire, into the torpor which lasted until the coming of the internal combustion engine initiated a new social revolution in rural England.

THE SOUTH NORTHANTS BY-ELECTION

The by-election in South Northamptonshire this autumn is likely to be one of the most interesting of the year and the society is hoping to compile a dossier of material concerning the election for the use of future historians. Members who attend election meetings are invited to write short descriptions of the proceedings, paying particular attention to the size and composition of the audience, the membership of the platform party and the issues raised by questioners. Copies of any literature distributed during the campaign will also be welcome. All material should be sent to the Editor of this magazine. There is no intention of publishing any of this material in the near future but it could be a valuable source for future historians. It is as much the duty of an historical society to record the present as to investigate the past.

REVIEWS SECTION

Alfred Beesley's "History of Banbury" is a remarkable work by a remarkable man. In his time, historical records were for the most part difficult of access and unarranged; and we marvel at the range, the depth of his researches, at his persistence, industry and accuracy. Moreover the span of his life was comparatively short and the compilation of the History was but one of many activities. **

Beesley was born at Banbury in 1800; he died and was buried in the churchyard here in 1847. He was apprenticed to a watchmaker at Deddington but only served a part of his time and thereafter devoted himself to literary and scientific pursuits. Turning to the history of his native town and the surrounding district, he seems to have explored most of the original sources then available, from the Public Records in the Tower of London to those in local collections and in private hands. He sought information wherever he thought it might be available. The hundreds of letters received in answer to his inquiries are preserved in the Bodleian Library. As he says in his Preface, the list of these correspondents "is nearly as long as that of my subscribers". Among those he named especially are Dr. Philip Bliss, Registrar of the University of Oxford, "for an introduction to the treasures of that university"; Mr. Cates of the British Museum "for much assistance during my long researches in that establishment"; Mr. Staunton of Longbridge House for copies of rare tracts; and George Baker of Northampton for being an exemplar: "it was in a great measure by the perusal of his invaluable History of Northampton that I was led ... to attempt, in the inadequate manner I have done, the compilation of the History of Banbury". The work was dedicated to a much beloved curate of Banbury, the Revd. J. R. Rushton who became incumbent of Hook Norton. It came out in parts and was published in collected form in 1841.

The subscribers numbered some five hundred and fifty. The list includes the names of members of the aristocracy, of the episcopal bench (though that of the Bishop of Oxford is missing), of the gentry and of the clergy (nearly all the incumbents of parishes for miles around are included). Among well known local names we notice Aplin, Blencowe, Beesley (six members of the family rallied round), Cheney, Gillett, Holbech, Pamprey, Loveday, Potts, Stone, Walford.

Beesley's "History" is not a connected account; it is, rather, an immensely valuable collection of antiquarian notes. And it must be admitted that according to our standards some important aspects are quite inadequately treated, particularly the origin and medieval development of the borough, ecclesiastical history, economic history and the history of education. Perhaps the strongest parts of the books are the architectural descriptions of the churches of the neighbourhood as they were before restoration, and the detailed account of the Civil War in the area. There is a wealth of useful and curious information about events and people, much of it to be found in the fascinating, copious footnotes. Later workers have, of course, made additions and corrections and have illuminated neglected topics; but it is certain that "Beesley", as his work as come to be known, will remain an indispensable work of reference.

E. R. C. Brinkworth

** Our next issue will include an assessment of Alfred Beesley as a poet.

BEESON, C. F. C.

"Clockmaking in Oxfordshire 1400-1850"

The Banbury Historical Society's Records

Publication for 1962.

With his opening quotation: "This book is written, not because it is finished, but because delay is unwise", the author modestly begins to set before the reader an incomparably rich haul of facts. Facts about clocks, sundials and sandglasses; about the people who made them and how and where they lived; about the places they were made for and the men who minded them. All so clearly presented by a skilled and loving hand that to anyone with the smallest interest in the history of the county, this book will be a delight.

To the specialist in English horological history as well as to the student of man rather than of his machines, it will be invaluable; but it will be no less rewarding to one of simple tastes who only wishes to know more about the maker of a still dependable two hundred year old example of county craftsmanship.

The book is divided into two main parts. The first, starting with the background to organized clockmaking in Oxfordshire in the chapters on Guilds and Crafts and Historical Review, passes on to the detailed description and histories of Turret Clocks, Sundials and Sandglasses. The lists include examples found or recorded in more than a hundred places in the county, arranged in alphabetical order for easy reference. To anyone who has attempted to collect the facts about even one of these ancient timekeepers, this is a monumental feat. Consider for a moment the tedious difficulties to be overcome: the journey to the place; the searching out of Vicar, Churchwarden or Clockminder; the noting down of all one sees or hears; the hours spent in Vestries, Libraries and Record Offices, reading early manuscripts to catch the rare reference to Clocke, Wyre and Chyme; the careful sifting of evidence before the writing and re-writing to produce the final considered and authoritative note. One can only marvel at such constancy and be grateful.

Turret clocks have seldom been displayed with such care and authority and never before on such a scale. Apart from a few well-known examples they have been almost ignored by antiquarians generally. But they are as much a part of the history of Church, College or Town Hall as the stained glass, screens, plate or brasses and are quite often older and more interesting. The same joiner who had worked on the fine roof of a parish church may well have been called in by his neighbour the blacksmith, busy on the new clock, to cut the wooden teeth of the winding gear or to make the barrel for the chimes.

Though the going movement may have been altered several times through the centuries to keep up with developments in the escapement, the original iron frame was seldom abandoned. There is an example in north Berkshire of a clock of late 17th century type, being fitted with a gravity escapement as late as 1937 in honour of the coronation of George VI. Their long life makes these clocks fascinating objects of study and in opening up this field of research, Dr. Beeson has shown how it should be done and what great possibilities there are for further discoveries.

The photographs show well the fine work of local men and will no doubt make the reader wish that their high cost had not prevented many more examples from being illustrated.

The list is by no means complete even for Oxfordshire, while the rest of the country in this respect is virtually unexplored. It is much to be hoped that interest will be awakened so that in future greater care will be taken of these valuable possessions than has been the case in the past.

But all this accounts for only half the book. In Part II the author notes nearly three hundred and forty (typically he writes: "more than three hundred and twenty") makers, apprentices, smiths and others, with a staggering wealth of detail concerning themselves, their families and work. Supplemented by another series of excellent photographs, this section will be the happy hunting ground of owners of county made clocks and watches. It is indeed unlikely that any makers, who lived or worked in Oxfordshire during the 450 years under review, have been overlooked, but the author makes no such claim and would be only too happy to be told of others.

The Knibbs, of course, and other men who worked in Oxford, are given proper attention and some fine examples of their work are illustrated. But probably the most intriguing part of the whole book, particularly to those who have the good fortune to live in or near the north of the county, is the amount of information given about the Quaker families of clockmakers. The Williams, Fardons and Gilkes become so real through Dr. Beeson's clear unemotional notes that one tends to forget that one cannot still take an asthmatic "grandfather" for treatment to Sibford Gower or Adderbury.

The most prolific of these makers seems to have been Richard Gilkes of Adderbury, son of Thomas of Sibford Gower, the 17th century founder of the industry in north Oxfordshire. This family spread itself as liberally as its clocks over the whole district; clockmakers turning up also in Burford, Charlbury, Chipping Norton and, over the Warwickshire border, in Shipston-on-Stour. The author notes that they and their Quaker brethren held the monopoly of this craft in some villages for over 150 years.

Throughout there are some nice touches that bring out the very smell of an earlier age. John Knibb of Oxford, tenant of part of a four storeyed gabled house in Holywell, sharing, with his shoemaker and tailor neighbours, the backyard, the pump and "house of office". Or poor John Kalabergo, settled in Banbury from Lombardy, returning one day with his nephew from a business trip, being shot dead by him on Williamscoote hill. The murderer, only three months later, was tried and executed at Oxford.

The book is rounded off with a useful topographical list of makers, an unusually comprehensive Bibliography, a Supplementary Index to people, places and things not already indexed alphabetically and a County Map showing the places mentioned. By the straightforward arrangement of all sections in alphabetical order, place or maker can be quickly found and there is no need for a lengthy index. The whole is comfortably free from marginal references.

Clearly printed on good paper with a stiff paper binding the book reflects great credit on author and printer. It is remarkable value at the price and cannot be too highly recommended.

L. S. Northcote.

Note: This book is available from the Hon. Secretary, B. H. S. Humber House, Bloxham, Banbury. Price to non-members - 30/-. Ordinary members may convert to Records members for 1962 by payment of an additional 15/-, if received before 31st December 1962, in which case they will be issued with this book. Price to members after 1st January 1963, as a back number, 25/-. Post free.

from Rev. W. Verrinder, 151 Middleton Road, Banbury.

Booklet commemorating 150th Anniversary Celebrations. 1962.

On Tuesday, 15th May 1962 special Services were held in Grimsbury Methodist Church to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Methodism in that area. A commemorative booklet was also issued which contains a detailed and fascinating survey of Grimsbury Methodist history written by Mr. Barrie Trinder. It is apparent that Methodism was in at the beginning of Grimsbury as a residential area when there was "little more than a cluster of houses around the Manor and the Green" plus "a collection of houses crowded into dark alleyways" across the Cherwell bridge. Since then Methodism has been closely involved in all the vicissitudes of the neighbourhood, sharing its years of development or decline. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that many doors open into the wider history of Grimsbury, and, indeed, of Banbury as a whole. True to his purpose the writer does not take us through them, but in passing he pauses upon the threshold to show us the many more journeys we might well take into the social, topographical and economic history of the district. For instance, we read that "Methodists in Banbury did much to aid the provision of facilities for elementary education in the 19th century. A Day School was opened in Church Lane Chapel in 1840, and Methodists gave considerable support to the British Schools in Crouch Street and the Infants' School in Church Passage". An invitation to further research is implicit in the remark that the site of the first Methodist School-Chapel in North Street is still undiscovered. No fact of interest has been omitted, we even find a description of the weather on the day of the Stonelaying at the present Chapel in West Street in 1871. Banbury Methodists are certainly indebted to Mr. Trinder for this painstaking study of their history. But the article has a wider appeal and deserves to be studied by all interested in the history of our town, and one hopes it may stimulate others to seek out the hidden secrets of Grimsbury's changeful past.

Ian H. Field

OTHER RECENT BOOKS ON THE BANBURY AREA

Reviewed by the Editor

ABBOTT, R.D. (Editor)

"The Last Main Line". Price 4/6.

Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, 1961.

In this book is reproduced a selection of the many hundreds of photographs taken during the building of the Great Central Railway London Extension by Mr. S.W.A. Newton, which have recently been given to the Leicester Museum. This line, from Annesley, north of Nottingham, to Quainton Road, north of Aylesbury, was begun in 1894 and opened to traffic in 1899. Its promotion was due largely to Sir Edward Watkin, chairman of the Great Central, Metropolitan and South Eastern and Chatham Railways, who began his railway career as secretary of the Buckinghamshire Railway which succeeded in reaching Banbury before the Great Western in 1850. The photographs are of enormous value not only to the student of civil engineering but also to the social historian. A picture of milk churns being unloaded from a farmer's cart at Calvert shows how great an impact a new railway could have on the economy of an agricultural area even as late as 1899. A photograph of a group of workmen which includes a very young boy, obviously tired, dazed and bemused by the frightening scale of the activity around him speaks volumes about the defects of the Victorian educational system. A view of a group of the fashionable awaiting a train at Charwelton contrasts vividly with the austere surroundings in which the navvies lived. Of particular local interest are photographs taken during the construction of the viaduct over the Ouse valley at Brackley and several pictures of railway installations at Woodford Halse. The standard of reproduction is high, and altogether this is a most valuable as well as a most unusual addition to the sources of local history for the late nineteenth century.

GODDARD-FENWICK, T. J.

"Stanton Harcourt: a brief history". Price 1/- from the Vicar.

This is a collection of notes on the history of Stanton Harcourt well duplicated on 20 quarto pages. It contains notes on the famous Devil's Quoits standing stones, a paragraph on the great barrow destroyed in 1940 and a chapter on the Harcourt family and the manor buildings which include the tower - where Alexander Pope translated the Iliad - and the great medieval kitchen. A very full account of the church is given with detailed descriptions of the Harcourt tombs. There are also interesting extracts from Manor Court laws and field orders of the 17th and early 18th centuries. The author admits that this is purely a first edition and implies that it may be followed at some future date by a full history. It is very much to be hoped that this ambition will be realised as these notes show that sources exist for a thorough and highly interesting account of the village.

HOBSON, M. G. and PRICE, K. L. H.

"Otmoor and its Seven Towns". (1961) Price 6/-.

Otmoor, that most unusual part of Oxfordshire, is a fascinating topic for any historian. The ancient rights of the inhabitants of the seven towns present absorbing problems to the medievalist, the early 19th century Otmoor riots are recognised as one of the most important manifestations of the agricultural unrest of the period, and the development of the landscape offers a classic problem to the historical geographer. M. G. Hobson and K. L. H. Price have produced a collection of historical notes on Otmoor which is of great interest and which shows evidence of detailed acquaintance with original sources and of much hard work "on the ground". After a short introductory chapter and short sections on the Roman Road, the birds and flowers of the area, the moor courts and the riots, each village is described separately. This may not be an ideal arrangement for it would be more useful to have information on such matters as industries and folk customs concentrated rather than diffused throughout the book, especially as Otmoor seems without doubt to have been a distinct economic and cultural unit. At the end of each chapter is a most useful list of the field names of each village, many of which were actually collected locally by the authors. The chapter on the riots is rather disappointing, though this subject is well covered in the Hammonds' "The Village Labourer". The most illuminating and valuable aspect of the book is the description of the workings of the moorland economy. Fishing was always a leading activity in such a waterlogged area and in the 17th century eels from Islip supplied the Ship Inn at Greenwich, and a Beckley fisherman was given monopoly rights by Oliver Cromwell as a reward for ferrying troops across the Cherwell before the battle of Islip Bridge. As recently as 1939 golden carp were caught by stakes and wires in Joseph's Stone Lake. Dyes, especially Shotover Ochre, were for long an important product, and blackberries from Charlton are still sold to I. C. I. for this purpose. The Otmoor version of the Oxfordshire waggon was famous and there is evidence of specialisation in its manufacture. Several of the villages did repairs and operated saw pits but the waggons were constructed only at Charlton. No attempt is made to explain why Otmoor was apparently so prosperous in medieval times and why its population so declined, but if an explanation of this most baffling problem is ever attempted it will owe much to the material collected in this admirable book.

JAMES, Henry.

"English Hours". Ed. A. D. Lowe, 1962. Price 12/6.

Many of our most vivid impressions of 19th century England come from the writings of foreigners, from Taine, Tocqueville and Engels, and a recent reprint of Henry James's impressions of his travels in England has a worthy place in this company. Everything James says deserves attention, but of particular local interest are his descriptions of Banbury, Broughton Castle, Wroxton Abbey and

Compton Wynnyates, originally published in 1877. James seems to have been somewhat confused by Banbury Cross and its legends. He complains of the antique gables placed around the "windows" and suggests that from one of them "the young person appealed to in the rhyme may have looked at the old woman as she rode and heard the music of her bells". One wonders if James realised that the cross was erected as recently as 1859 and what version of the rhyme he had learned. He was most pleased by both Broughton Castle and Wroxton Abbey, though he mistakenly considered the latter to be of the same period as Compton Wynnyates. He found Compton Wynnyates beyond adequate description, feeling that it had an "air of solitude and decay - of having been dropped into its grassy hollow as an ancient jewel is deposited upon a cushion". It cannot be claimed that James adds anything of significance to our historical or topographical knowledge, but the reactions of this most civilised of Americans to what he found in England never fail to be of great interest.

TOYNBEE, Margaret (Editor)

"The Papers of Captain Henry Stevens, Waggon-Master-General to King Charles I." The Oxfordshire Record Society publication for 1962. (Annual subscription 21/-; price to non-members 25/-, available from the Hon. Treasurer, O. R. S., c/o Bodleian Library, Oxford).

Henry Stevens was a country gentleman who lived at or near Easington in south Oxfordshire who took up arms for King Charles early in 1642. Doubtless he proved himself an able and trustworthy servant, for on the 1st November of the following year he was made the King's Waggon-Master-General. He was also at this time Commissary-General of Victuals for the garrison of Oxford, the royalist capital. The collection of papers which Miss Toynbee has edited records his activities between the time of his appointment and December 1644, when he may have been replaced. Of particular local interest are an order dated the 7th March 1643/4 telling Stevens to despatch 3 loads of ammunition from the Royal magazine at New College to Banbury Castle, and one dated the 28th June 1644 which told him to send "all the bread that can be gotten to be conveyed with the Queenes Regiment now marching to his Majesty's Army at or near Banbury. Together with cheese proportionable to". The Queen's regiment failed to join the King before the battle of Cropredy Bridge which was fought on the 29th. The papers reveal much that is interesting about Oxford and the surrounding area where the city was the King's headquarters, and their value is much enhanced by Miss Toynbee's illuminating footnotes.

LEWIS, Rev. R. R.

All Saints' Church, Mollington. 1962

The Vicar of Claydon and Mollington has recently published a pamphlet giving a detailed and accurate description of Mollington Church. He draws attention to a number of architectural features of considerable interest, among which are the porch in the style of Wren built in 1715, the 15th century chancel screen and the standing stones on the south side of the chancel. Dates of the principal alterations are given together with measurements of important parts of the church. It is to be hoped that the campaign to raise £3,000 for the repair of the church, of which the publication of this pamphlet is part, will quickly reach its target.

GRIERSON, Flora

"The Story of Woodstock Gloves". 1962.

The Woodstock glove trade is one of the few prospering survivors of Oxfordshire's ancient industries, and one of the most valuable features of this little book is the use the author makes of the knowledge of an elderly experienced glover. Gloving had its origins in the leather trade, for the royal hunting forest, now

Blenheim Park, and nearby Wychwood Forest provided ample supplies of deer hides suitable for glove making. The connection with the royal household and later with that of the Marlborough family also seems to have influenced the design of Woodstock gloves, for the town has always been famous for its elegant and fashionable products, and until the beginning of the present century relied almost exclusively on deer skins, though other centres had long used inferior leathers. From earliest times heavy duty gloves for such purposes as hawking, hedging and coach driving have also been made in Woodstock. The town was the only major gloving centre in England to survive the crisis which hit such towns as Yeovil when foreign gloves were admitted duty free in 1828 for the first time since 1463. The importance of glove sewing at home by married women as an additional source of income for agricultural families in the 19th century is pointed out, and it is interesting to learn that this practice continues today in some villages. The text is illustrated by three well chosen photographs. This is a most useful contribution to our knowledge of local economic history.

AUTUMN PROGRAMMEWednesday, 26th September

S. A. JEAUVONS, Esq.

"Midland Goldsmiths of the Elizabethan Period". (Illustrated)

Thursday, 29th November

SQUADRON-LEADER G. WOOD.

"Recent advances in Neolithic and Bronze Age studies".

(Special reference will be made to the use of aerial photography in Oxfordshire).

Each of these meetings will be held at 7.30 p.m. in the hall of the Technical College in Bath Road. It is hoped to arrange for coffee and biscuits to be available after the meetings.

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Oxford University Extension Lectures

Dr. E. R. C. BRINKWORTH will be delivering a series of lectures on "Eminent Banburians" on Wednesday evenings in the new year. Details later.

Council for British Archaeology

A conference on "The Iron Age in the South-East Midlands" will be held at Luton on Saturday October 27th. The principal speaker will be Professor C. F. C. Hawkes. Any member of the society interested should contact the Secretary.

Christmas Card

The society's Christmas card for 1962 will feature a full-colour 19th century view of the Cowfair, Market Place and Town Hall. The cost will be 9/- per dozen. Orders should be sent to the Secretary.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The society's annual general meeting was held at Wroxton Abbey on Saturday, May 4th 1962. The president, the Rt. Hon. Lord Saye and Sele took the chair. Reports from officers were read and approved. (For details see the March issue of "Cake and Cockhorse"). Mr. V. Bromley tendered his resignation as Hon. Archaeological Director and as a member of committee. Dr. G. E. Gardam was elected to fill the vacancy on the committee and Mr. J. H. Fearon agreed to assume responsibility for the society's archaeological activities. All other sitting officers were re-elected.

The meeting was addressed by Dr. E. R. C. Brinkworth on the most appropriate subject of the Norths of Wroxton. Dr. Brinkworth described in considerable detail the activities of this most illustrious family including Roger North, the Elizabethan diplomat, Sir Thomas North, the translator of Plutarch, Francis North, Lord Chancellor under Charles II, Frederick Lord North, Prime Minister, and Brownlow North; Bishop of Winchester. He was thanked for a most interesting talk by the President who added his own reminiscences of William, Lord North, who died in 1932. The address was followed by tea.

Since the annual general meeting Mr. J. H. Fearon has been elected chairman of the executive committee for the current year and Mr. B. S. Trinder has taken over the editorship of "Cake and Cockhorse".

PUBLICATIONS

We are pleased to record the appearance of the society's records publication for 1962, Dr. C. F. C. Beeson's "Clockmaking in Oxfordshire, 1400-1850", which is reviewed in this issue. Unfortunately prolonged printing difficulties have delayed the publication of the 1961 volume, the second part of the Banbury marriage registers. It is hoped that this will have been distributed before the next issue of the magazine appears.

**OXFORD ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

The Society is concerned with the archaeology, history and architecture of the Oxford region. Its activities include lectures, excursions and the publication of an annual journal, Oxoniensia. The Society also endeavours to preserve and safeguard local buildings and monuments. Full membership (To include Oxoniensia) one guinea. Ordinary membership ten shillings. Apply Hon. Treasurer, O.A. & H.S., Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.
