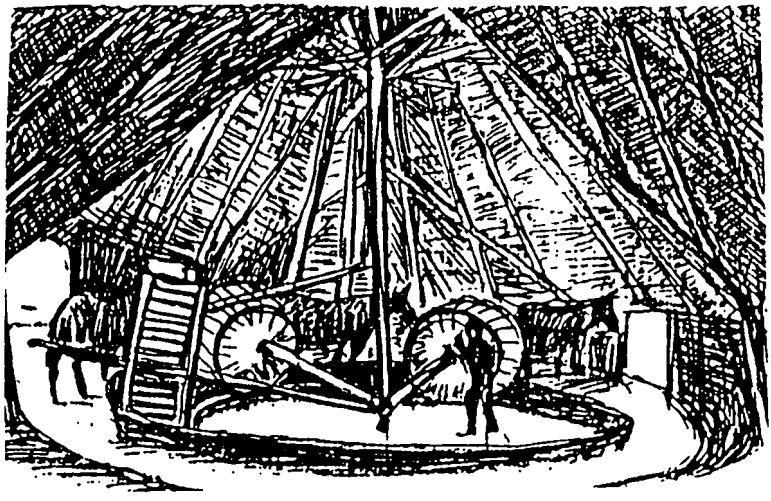
CAKE AND COCKHORSE



BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Summer 2000 **£2.50**

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BANBURY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Details of the Society's activities and publications will be found inside the back cover.

Cake and Cockhorse

The magazine of the Banbury Historical Society, issued three times a year.

Volume 14 **Number Nine** **Summer 2000**

In our first 'millennium' issue we concentrated not only on the distant past but also, not surprisingly in the circumstances, on *places*.

In this issue the emphasis is definitely on *people*. We are all aware of the canal, and of its enormous importance to Banbury from the late eighteenth century on (with our new museum likely to reassert this). But, apart from the boat people so vividly brought to life in Sheila Stewart's *Ramlin Rose: The Boatwoman's Story*, who *ran* the canal? Hugh Compton tells us, not just of the bosses, the senior officials, but right down to the labourers and the boy assistants earning just a few shillings a week; and also how the management fortified themselves for their annual boat trip along the canal.

Vivienne Billington's research into the itinerant woad growers and harvesters reveals a virtually invisible but very useful section of our community in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Tracking people who moved around is notoriously difficult, especially in records that rarely mention occupations.

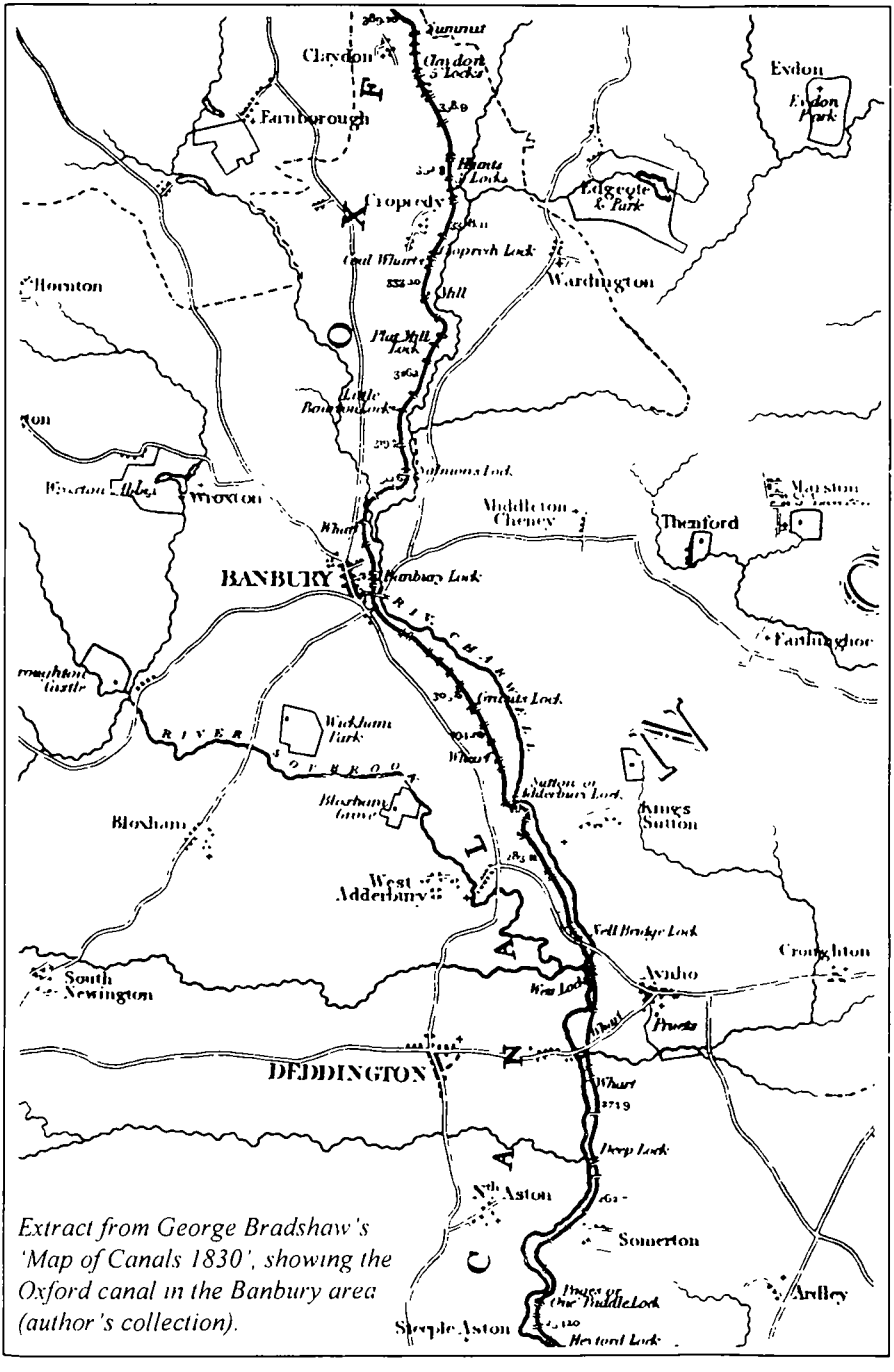
These two articles both over-modestly present the results of many hours, days, weeks, months, years of specialist research.

Quite different, but just as worthwhile, is yet another reminiscence of Miss Bromley's school. This, and its predecessors, show just how influential a modest 'dame school' can be and how fondly it may be remembered.

The first issue of *Cake & Cockhorse* appeared in September 1959. Forty-one years later, this issue concludes our fourteenth volume (normally three years to a volume). Few other local historical societies can match this record, of which we are justifiably proud, but of course this has only been achieved by the steady stream of well-researched articles from our contributors. Without you we could publish nothing – but maybe without this journal, you would never have published or even researched your subject!

The indexes to this volume show just how wide-ranging our coverage is. We still hope to remedy the lack of these for Volumes Seven to Thirteen.

Cover A woadmill (a sketch based on the oil painting of Parson Drove Woad Mill, by Alfred Balding of Wisbech, *c.*1900, now at the Science Museum in London).



Extract from George Bradshaw's 'Map of Canals 1830', showing the Oxford canal in the Banbury area (author's collection).

STAFFING OXFORD CANAL – around 1851

Hugh Compton

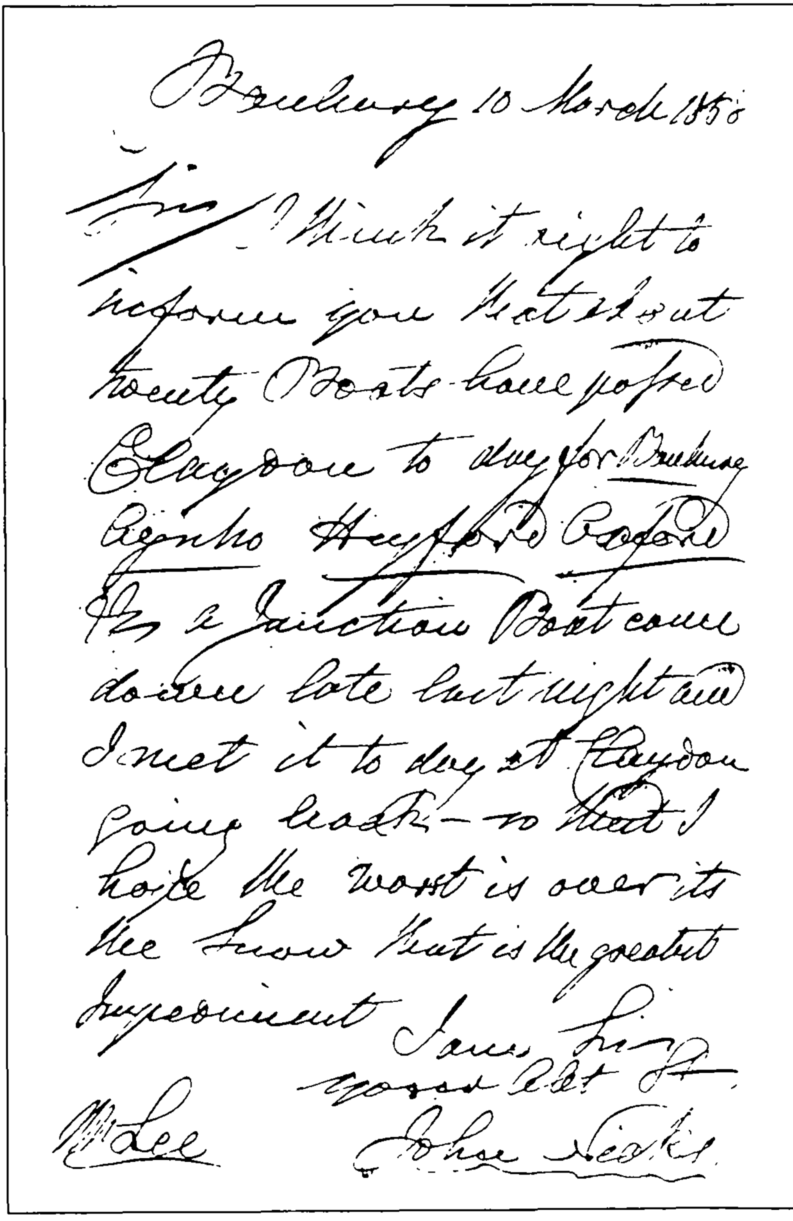
Who worked on the Canal? The 1851 Census of Population gave more detailed information than previous censuses, *e.g.* exact age and place of birth, and is therefore of special interest to family historians and others with similar interests. This information can be matched-up with known facts about staff of the Oxford Canal Company (OCC) to give a broader picture of the situation at that time: a particularly interesting one.

Another event in 1851 was the opening of the Great Exhibition, symbolising the country's prosperity, and indeed the whole period starting in the mid-1840s and ending with the depression of the 1870s was a 'high noon' for economic advance. The situation was so encouraging that in 1853 the OCC was able to consider giving all its wages-grade staff an increase of about 20%. Despite the emerging railway competition, the Company was still able to pay an 11.5% dividend, well above any other concern in the canal/rail transport field. When considering pay increases, they produced a detailed statement showing the name, location, weekly wage and trade of all such staff and whether living in a Company house. Adding these staff to the known managerial, clerical and engineering staff, brings the total number of employees to about a hundred, and of these 29 were employed in the Banbury area between Wormleighton to the north and Somerton to the south.

The opening of the Buckinghamshire Railway to Banbury on 1 May 1850 and to Oxford on 20 May 1851 brought serious competition for the OCC, as can be seen from the following figures for coal carried during the year ended 1 October 1853.

Destination	*OCC*	*Buckinghamshire Railway*
Banbury	13,716 tons	14,819 tons
Oxford	24,079 tons	51,608 tons

Despite this ominous trend there was no intention of reducing staff at this time, but rather every effort was being made to maintain the system in pristine condition and even modernise it as circumstances permitted in order to hold off the competition. Collating information from the sources mentioned, along with others, enables us to discover more about the various grades of staff employed by the Company in 1851.


Banbury 10 March 1858

Sir I think it right to inform you that about twenty Boats have passed Claydon to day for Banbury Agents ~~Heyford~~ Oxford &c a Junction Boat came down late last night and I met it to day at Claydon going back — so that I hope the worst is over its the snow that is the greatest Impediment I am Sir your obt St

Wm Lee John Nicks

Letter from John Nicks, Engineer for the southern part of the Oxford canal, written to the Chief Clerk at Oxford about boats passing since the breaking of the ice in March 1858 (Public Record Office: RAIL855/145/3)

Engineer

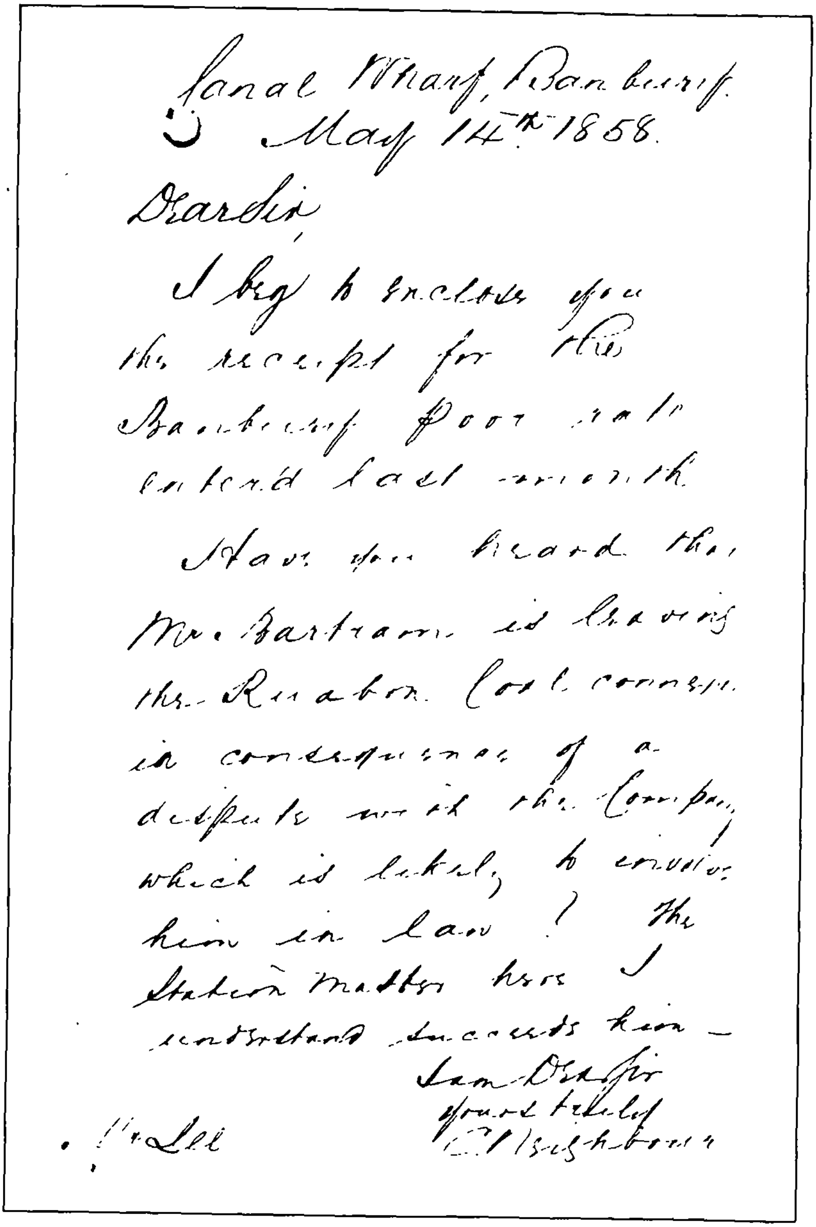
John Nicks, the Company's engineer for the southern part of the canal, was paid an annual salary of £100 and lived in Castle Street, Banbury, at Watford Cottage, rented for him by the OCC at £50 p.a. He is not mentioned in the census as no doubt he was working away from home, although his daughter, who was born at Warwick, is shown, but not his wife. Shortly after this, in the mid-1850s, a housing development which was to his liking took place to the east of the canal at Grimsbury, so he left his rented accommodation in Castle Street and moved to South Parade. In October 1861 he advised the Company that he was seriously ill and therefore unable to carry out his duties. In response, the Superintendant wished him well and told him that while he was off sick he would be paid £5 per month. Alas his health did not improve and he died on 12 February 1862, aged 67. His wife, **Mary**, survived him until January 1864 when she also died, aged 70.

Wharfingers

Charles Neighbour was the wharfinger at *Banbury*, an Oxford man aged 28, who lived in the OCC's house at 42 Bridge Street with his wife of 27. He was very much an OCC man having first started as junior clerk at the tender age of 14 in 1837 at the OCC's new head office in Oxford – now the quarters of the Master of St Peter's College. Within one year he had proved himself and got promoted to Assistant Clerk with an anuual salary of £30. The years 1840 and 1842 each saw rises of £10 p.a. until in 1844 he became Assistant at £60 p.a. In 1846 his rise was £15 and in 1849 a further £10 was added. He now felt he had sufficient salary to set up home. So, when he managed to get time off just before Christmas – 23 December to be precise – he went to Stadhampton, a village some eight miles south-east of Oxford, and married **Elizabeth Wiggins**. Finally in 1851 he was transferred to Banbury with a salary of £85 p.a., which enable him to employ a servant, 15-year-old **Sarah Jones** from Nethercote, a hamlet 1½ miles to the east of the canal in Northamptonshire.

Through all the vicissitudes of the OCC he stayed in Banbury until he retired in 1891, surviving an incident when he was found stealing coal from the local merchants for the benefit of the office fire. It is believed he died in 1898.

His duties included the collection of tolls from all boats passing Banbury, which in 1852 raised £2,999 for the OCC. Among the



Canal Wharf, Banbury.
May 14th 1858.

Dear Sir

I beg to enclose you the receipt for the Banbury poor rate entered last month.

Have you heard that Mr. Bartram is leaving the Ruabon Coal concern in consequence of a dispute with the Company which is likely to involve him in law? The Station master here I understand succeeds him —

I am Dear Sir
Yours truly
C. Neighbour

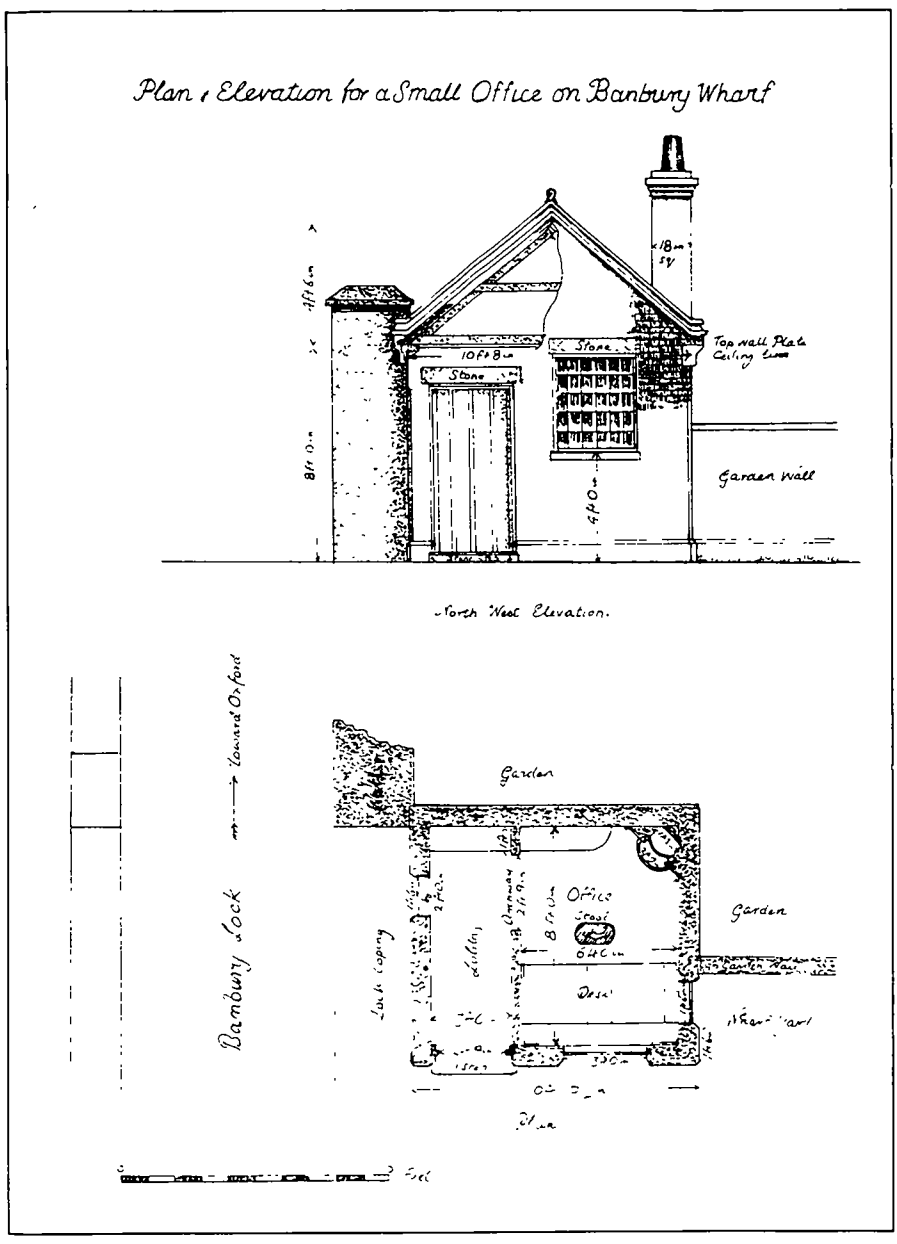
Mr Lee

Letter from Charles Neighbour, wharfinger at Banbury, to the Chief Clerk at Oxford about poor rates and coal business matters, May 1858 (Public Record Office RAIL855/145/5)

disbursements he had to pay out were rates to the parishes of Adderbury, Banbury, Bodicote, Bourton, Neithrop and Somerton; he also met the local Overseers of the Poor.

Charles Blunt, aged 25, had been the wharfinger at *Cropredy* since June 1842. He originally came from Aynho and had living with him in the OCC house his widowed mother, aged 49, who had been born in Wolvercote, just outside Oxford and beside the canal. Considering his limited scope for taking tolls etc from boats which had not paid elsewhere, his receipts in 1852 of £240 were quite creditable, and this was reflected in his salary of £50 p.a. Unfortunately in 1859 he had serious problems with the coal trade, which culminated in the OCC dismissing him in April of that year. However, in appreciation of his mother's condition they allowed him to stay on in the OCC house until the new tenant arrived in September, giving him time to look for alternative accommodation.

The wharfinger's house at Cropredy, with the lock keeper's house beyond the bridge, in 1926. Note the narrowing of the canal to permit checking of the boat's contents/weight (Packer's Studio, Chipping Norton).



Plan by Frederick Wood of the Banbury lock keeper's office built about 1845, which was demolished with the coming of the bus station in 1962 (Warwickshire Record Office: CR1590/P305/2).

Lock Keepers

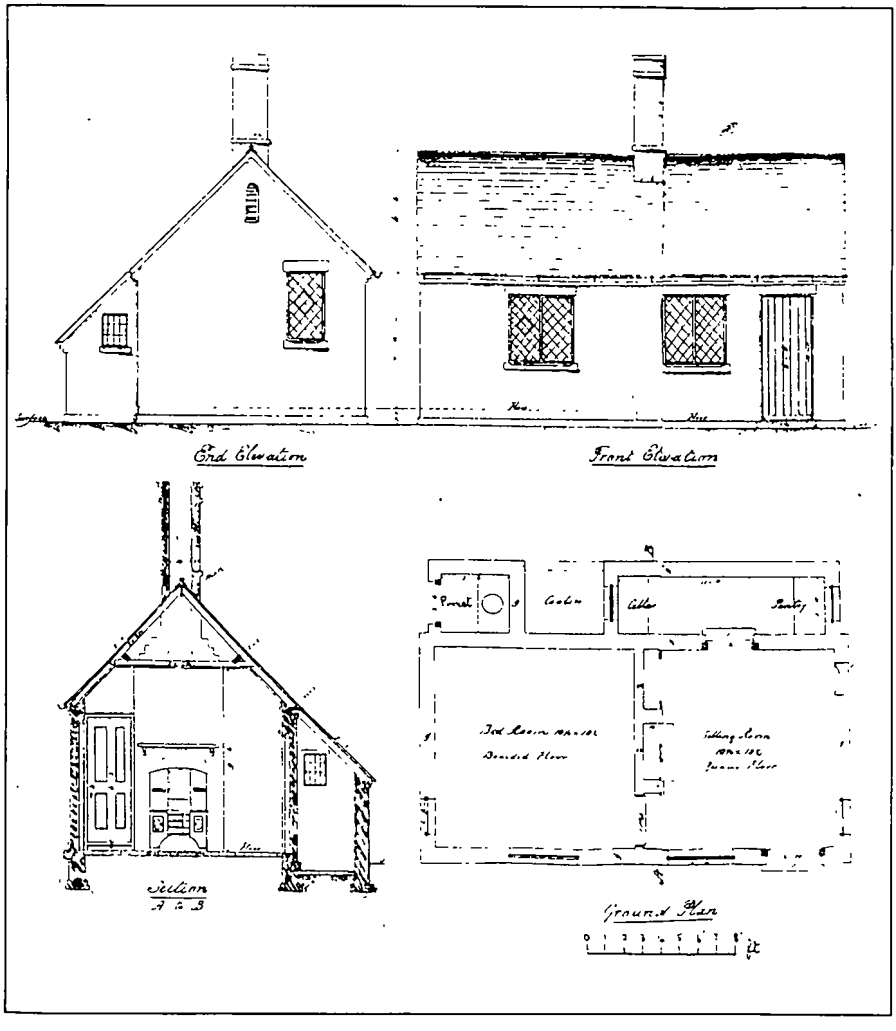
Little seems to be known about **G. Samson**, the keeper of *Banbury lock (No. 26)*, who lived in a little cottage nearby in Mill Street, but he had the distinction of being the highest paid man in his position on the OCC. His weekly wage of 17s. was far above others, whose wages varied between 8s. and 14s., thus reflecting the importance of Banbury. His duties in the main were confined to the immediate area of the lock, where an office was erected for him in 1844, and included gauging all boats to determine weight of cargo, controlling road traffic across the lift-bridge etc.

To the north of Banbury there were four lock-keepers before the summit level, all earning 12s. per week. Part of their duties was to render assistance to passing craft, whose number in 1864 amounted to 6,071 boats. More importantly, they had to ensure that the water level between each lock was correctly maintained, which in times of drought would mean visits to the reservoirs at Boddington, Clattercote and Wormleighton to adjust their weirs. Conversely, in times of flood, stop-planks along the canal had to be removed from locks to ensure a quicker run-off of surplus water. Ice was much more serious, as failure to deal with the matter promptly could result in the closure of the canal, sometimes for months. It was his job to see that all ice was removed from locks to ensure their continued use. When necessary, ice-breakers were brought into use to deal with the problem between locks under the guidance of the engineer.

John Jobson, aged 65, a native of Shutford West, lived at *Little Bourton lock (No. 24)* with his wife **Sarah**, ten years his junior, who came from Great Bourton. John died in 1857. His wife was then given one month's notice to quit the cottage and at the end of the month was given a £5 departing gift.

At *Cropredy lock (No.22)* **Christianna Hunderwood**, a widow aged 74, was in charge, though most of the work was done by her son **Jeremiah Sabin**, aged 35, who was born at Wardington, one and a quarter miles to the east of the canal, though she herself hailed from Cropredy.

The cottage at *Elkington lock (No. 19)* was the home of **John Letts**, aged 78, and his wife **Mary**, aged 70. While he came from Napton near the junction with the Warwick and Napton canal, she came from Broadwell, eight miles south-west of Witney. John appears to have died in October 1853, while Mary outlived him until March 1863.



Plan by Frederick Wood of Aynho Weir lock keeper's cottage constructed about 1849 and demolished in the 1970s (Warwickshire Record Office: CR1590/P305/2).

At the south end of the summit level there is *Claydon lock (No. 14)* and in the adjacent cottage lived **Richard Busby**, aged 59, a native of Great Tew. With him was **Elizabeth** his wife aged 53, his son **Daniel** aged 20, who worked as a labourer on the canal, plus his daughter **Emma** aged 19, all of whom were born at Napton in Warwickshire.

To the south of Banbury, the workload was not as great, so it is not surprising that the lock-keeper at *Grant's lock (No. 27)* in the parish of Bodicote was only paid 9s. per week. Here lived **John Lines**, aged 67, from Hillmorton near Rugby on the Oxford canal, with his wife **Mary**, aged 69, who was born at Broadwell in Warwickshire. John died in February 1875 and, as it was a tied cottage, his widow had to vacate the premises, She went to Fenny Compton and to help her the OCC kindly gave her a pension of 6s. per week.

Aynho Weir lock (No. 30) is unusual as it is diamond-shaped instead of rectangular, with only a one foot drop to equate the volume of water required for the next lock, which had a drop of twelve foot. **J. Smith** was the keeper here and lived in the cottage which once stood adjacent to the lock, but was demolished some time after the last war.

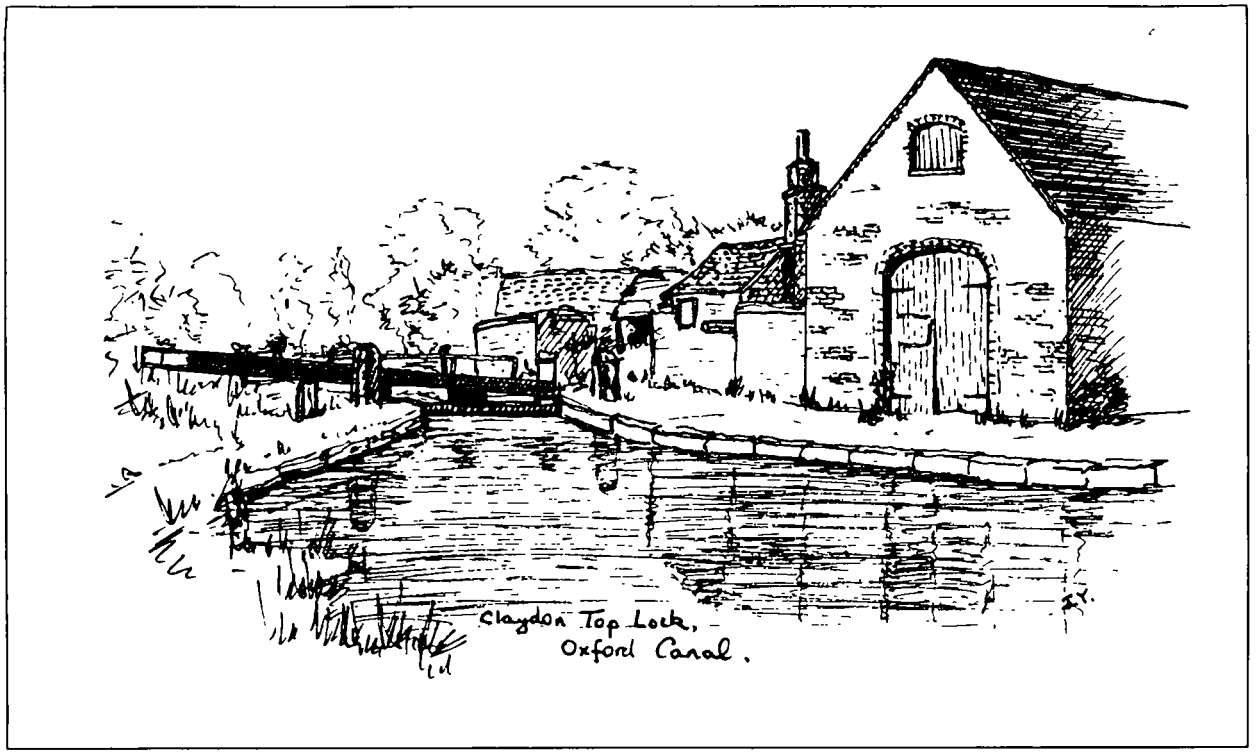
William Ford, aged 52, who was born at Aynho, was keeper at *Somerton lock (No. 31)*. His wife **Lucy**, aged 54, who hailed from Begbroke, a village one mile west of the canal near Kidlington, must have found this lock cottage a bit remote from civilisation, as the nearest place of any importance was the village wharf about one mile away along the towing path.

Foremen

On the engineering side, the canal was divided up into ten sectors each generally having a foreman in charge, who was provided with a house and garden. Whilst his word might be law for many, his wage was generally less than that of the artisans under his control.

The sector to the north of Banbury stretched for ten miles to Wormleighton and included thirteen locks, 31 bridges, and the remaining segments of Fenny Compton tunnel. This was the responsibility of **William Morgan**, who was paid 16s. per week. From his depot at Claydon he controlled ten men:

Carpenter	1	Blacksmiths	2	Mason	1
Labourers	4	Boatmen	2		



Oxford Canal Company's Engineering depot at Claydon in the 1990s The site was restored not so long ago as a shop for passing pleasure boats (Railway & Canal Historical Society's collection)

To the south of Banbury the sector extended for thirteen miles to Heyford and included seven locks and forty bridges. This was the responsibility of **Richard Townsend**, aged 46, who resided in the house by *Nell Bridge lock (No. 29)* with his wife **Susannah** (*née* **Wadham**), two years his junior, whom he had married at Adderbury on 7 July 1831. They had five children, including a son **George**, born September 1834, who worked on the canal as an OCC boatman in his father's gang. Townsend's was an important location, as in times of flood when the Cherwell was high, empty boats were often found to have insufficient headroom under Nell Bridge, the turnpike road bridge *(No. 187)*, carrying what is now the A41 (Adderbury to Aynho) road, so it was down to him to run off excess water where feasible to alleviate the situation, in conjunction with the lock-keeper at *Aynho Weir lock (No. 30)*.

Nell Bridge was one of the few on the Oxford canal which had no towing path underneath, presumably because the canal builder for this section – James Barnes of Banbury and Bodicote – wanted to reduce the size of the arch to ensure it was capable of carrying the heavy road traffic above.

This presented a problem to boatmen who of necessity had to cross the road with the horse, and often the towing line was still attached to start the movement out of the lock. This practice was a hazard to traffic on the road and a sign was erected by the lock stating that this was contrary to the OCC's Bye-Law.

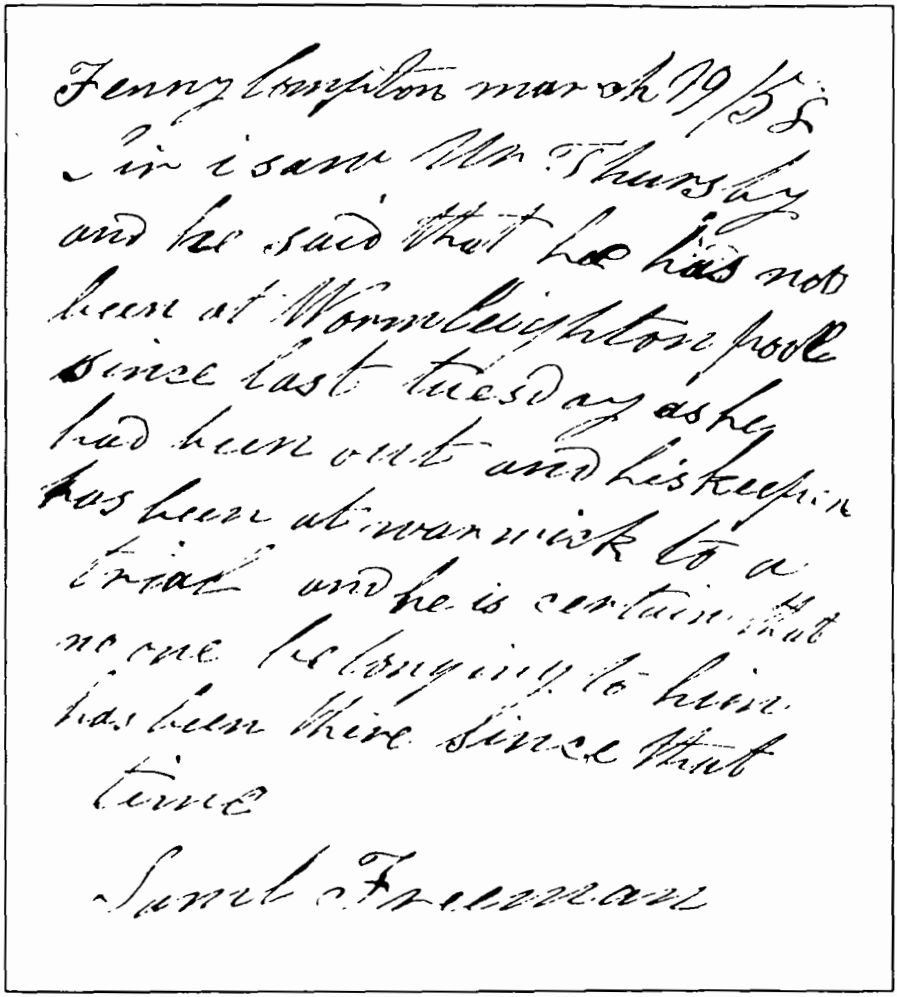
On 4 March 1848 **Joseph Fisher** on his way from Banbury to Oxford allowed his horse to cross the road with the towing line still attached, which was run into by **Thomas Huxford**, riding from Chipping Warden to Bicester. The force of the horse against the towing line broke it in two and the part that was *attached* to the mast struck **Elizabeth Townsend**, (the 78-year-old mother of the canal foreman), who was standing by the bridge, in the face, and killed her. Elizabeth (*née* **Brewer**) had married **William Townsend** way back on 26 August 1788 at Adderbury, but had been widowed on 11 June 1833.

Sadly for Richard Townsend his wife died in 1868, but three years later he was still at his post and **Catherine Whate** of Upper Heyford had moved in as his housekeeper. He died eight years later on 6 February 1879.

To assist with the work within his sector he had six staff:

Carpenter 1 Mason 1 Labourer 2 Boatmen 2.

With a reduced level of responsibility, both in terms of staff numbers and boats passing, his wage was down to 15s. per week.


Penny Compton march 19/55
Sir i saw Mr Thursby
and he said that he has not
been at Wormleighton locks
since last tuesday as he
had been out and is keeping
a man at work to a
crane and he is certain that
no one belonging to him
has been there since that
time
Samuel Freeman

Note from Samuel Freeman, stone mason, who worked at Claydon, about Mr Thursby, another canal company's stone mason, who worked on the summit level towards Napton (Public Record Office: RAIL855/145/3)

Carpenters

The most demanding job for a carpenter was the making of a replacement lock gate, as it had to fit exactly to prevent loss of water. This entailed correctly measuring the existing gate which had to be renewed, cutting the timber to the right dimensions and then being on site to make any last minute adjustments when it was fitted.

William Hemmings, aged 60, worked in the OCC's depot at Claydon and lived in the village of Cropredy where since 1842 he had rented a plot of land from OCC as a garden. His wage of 19s. per week compared favourably with that of the head carpenter at Hillmorton in Warwickshire who received 24s. He himself came from Sulgrave, a Northamptonshire village some seven miles north-east of Banbury. His wife, **Sarah** *née* **Roller**, aged 51, whom he had married at Windlesham church in Surrey on 24 December 1818, came from Bagshot. They had a son **John**, aged 30, but it seems he did not follow in his father's footsteps. Hemmings senior was much involved with the partial opening out of Fenny Compton tunnel in 1838-9, when he was responsible for repairs to barrows and making horse-runs. This was followed two years later by involvement with the building of the Fenny Compton brickworks.

Joseph Tarver, aged 67, a native of Claydon, lived in his own house adjacent to what is now known as *King's Sutton lock (No. 28)* by *bridge 179*. When his father, **Samuel**, died at Claydon in 1835 he inherited all his carpentry tools. His weekly wage of 18s. enabled him to support his wife, **Sarah** (*née* **Wootten**), aged 41, who came from Croughton in Northamptonshire, some 3½ miles east of Nell Bridge, whom he married at Oxford on 6 November 1845. She died on 12 March 1868; he lived a further seven years and died on 7 March 1875.

Masons

The title belies the fact that any person in this trade had to be proficient in several aspects of the building trade, whether working in stone, bricks or cement. To the north of Banbury there was **Samuel Freeman**, aged 41, who received 18s. per week and lived with his wife in a cottage, with garden, provided by the Company at Fenny Compton tunnel.

To the south was **George Golby** of Nell Bridge, aged 22, who lived with his mother **Ann** of Hillmorton in the OCC's cottage with garden just to the north of Somerton lock. Here the Company had a brickworks where his father made bricks etc during the period 1827-40. His wage was the same as Freeman's.

Blacksmiths

The small engineering complex at Claydon contained a smithy which undertook work for all points between Napton Junction in Warwickshire and Heyford in Oxfordshire. The blacksmith who lived in one of the cottages by Fenny Compton tunnel was **Charles Lines**, aged 38, who was paid 18s. per week. Like his wife **Sarah**, aged 40, he was born at Claydon. He was assisted by **G. Griffiths** who received 8s. per week.

Boatmen

The OCC employed a small number of boatmen whose duties included the conveyance of bricks from the works at Fenny Compton, gravel from the quarry at Adderbury, and any other item such as new lock gates for the maintenance of the canal. From time to time the OCC hired out these narrow boats with crews and in consequence they had to be passed to work on the Grand Junction canal etc and have living accommodation. Unlike conventional narrow boats they only had numbers, not names.

At Claydon there was **George Paxton**, aged 35, with four daughters. No wife is shown in the 1851 census so perhaps she was away when the enumerator called. He lived on a Company boat, which must have had certain advantages although it was less spacious than a house, and his wage was 12s. per week. It was to be another fourteen years before iron boats took the place of wooden boats, these being supplied by J. & W. Horton of Smethwick. With Paxton was **William Sa(u)nders**, of boatmen stock, who was born on 4 April 1824 at Grimsbury. As he was an assistant his wage was 6s. per week, but shortly afterwards in September he left the OCC and went into carrying himself with a narrow boat named 'Defiance'.

Down at Nell Bridge there was **Charles Flint**, aged 37, who came from the local village of Adderbury, although his wife **Charlotte** (*née* **Barnes**), aged 31, came from Newington in south London indicating, apparently, the extent to which boatmen moved about. Their marriage, which took place on 22 November 1836, produced four children. With Flint was **George Townsend**, aged 16, who, like his counterpart at Claydon, received 6s. per week. He lived with his father, the canal foreman, in the building near Nell Bridge lock.

Labourers

All the labourers on the canal were paid 12s. per week and had to find their own living accommodation. They undertook all 'agricultural' work such as hedging, ditching, repairs of towing paths, canal banks and other work such as dredging.

Those who worked to the north of Banbury were:

Samuel Sole, aged 42, who lived at Boddington with his wife **Sarah**, ten years his senior, who came from Swindon in Wiltshire. They had one son and one daughter.

Also at Boddington were **George Creed**, aged 30, with his wife **Priscilla**, aged 24, of Claydon, and their son.

Jacob Frost, aged 29, lived two miles west of Cropredy in the village of Mollington,which is on the Banbury – Coventry turnpike road (A423), with his wife **Ann**, aged 26, and their two daughters and a son, all of whom were born locally.

As to **George Rowbotham**, listed in Company records, nothing is known, so he may have moved into the area after the Census was taken.

As mentioned earlier, there were two labourers in the sector immediately to the south of Banbury, who may have obtained from their fathers knowledge that would help them with their work. They were:

William Eglington, aged 37, who came from Banbury, his father being a bricklayer; and

William Perry, aged 35, who came from Neithrop, a suburb of Banbury outside the Borough boundary. His father was a sawyer who for a time served in the Oxfordshire Militia.

Management

The wages/salaries mentioned earlier need to be set against the top men in the OCC.

Frederick Wood, the Company's engineer, lived at Eldon Place near Rugby, and was in receipt of an anuual salary of £500 plus an additional £50 for the hire of a horse.

David Durell, who was born on 26 April 1798, had been the OCC's superintendant since 5 January 1826. He lived with an aged father, **Dr David Durell**, a native of Jersey, in the parsonage at Mongewell near Wallingford. The younger man's salary was £500 which no doubt helped his father to maintain his four middle-aged daughters, and pay the wages of the four servants, a footman and a butler, who looked after them all.

It is appreciated that it is very difficult to relate the level of wages/ salaries mentioned in this article with current earnings. To overcome this problem it is suggested that the figures quoted be multiplied by seventy.

Once a year the committee of management undertook a three days' tour of inspection of their canal by water. This enabled them to see and speak with all their employees as necessary and talk to customers. In addition when the committee boat was passing through a lock the option could be taken to inspect their adjacent cottage and speak with the occupier's wife or housekeeper with regard to maintenance or capital works required.

The whole journey was timetabled and the extract below is pertinent to this Banbury area:

Fenny Compton Brickyard	15.00
Claydon Top lock	15.45
Cropredy	17.30 – 17.45
Banbury	19.30 – 08.30
Aynho	11.00 – 11.15
Heyford	13.30 – 13.45

To keep their spirits up on the boat they had aboard two bottles of claret, three of sherry, five of whisky, one large rum, one small rum and two bottles of white wine. Breakfast was taken on the boat and the committee were put up over night at the White Lion hotel in Banbury's High Street.

All in all it seems everyone knew their place and management were as reasonable as could be expected, having regard to the general practice of the time.

Acknowledgments

In writing this article I wish to place on record my thanks for the cooperation and help given by many persons and organisations: principally the Public Record Office at Kew, the libraries at Banbury and Oxford and the County Record Offices at Oxford and Warwick; to Stanley Holland who kindly corrected a number of grammatical errors, to Alan Faulkner who checked for historical accuracy; and lastly to Jeremy Gibson who initiated the idea in the first place.

WOAD IN THE BANBURY AREA

Vivien Billington

Historical Background

The dye-plant woad or wad (*Isatis tinctoria)*, a biennial belonging to the brassica family, was cultivated from early times for the rich blue dye which could be produced from its leaves, and which also formed the basis of blacks, greens and other dark colours. But in the later Middle Ages, when the English cloth industry was in high repute, woad was largely imported from France, Italy, Spain, the Low Countries and Germany. Then, in Tudor times a combination of economic and political factors led to official steps being taken to encourage woad-growing on a commercial scale in England, so that the country could be self-sufficient and save on loss of bullion. There was always the threat of foreign supplies being cut off, and a heavy duty imposed by the French on woad exports about 1579 caused a sudden rise in the price of foreign woad. This, combined with a fall in the price of grain a few years later, made farmers keen to try something profitable like woad, and it was widely tried out on a variety of terrains. In the late sixteenth century it was both encouraged and (as a novel crop) subject to bureaucratic controls, but in 1601 the controls were swept away and woad-growing was allowed freely except within three miles of London and around royal palaces, because the smell of fermenting woad offended Queen Elizabeth.

The *Victoria County History* for Oxfordshire is more informative than the volumes for some other counties in recording early examples of woad and other novel crops. For example, at Glympton, about twelve miles south of Banbury, Thomas Tesdale, tenant of the manor from *c.*1585 until his death in 1610, grew woad as well as the more usual crops. At Hanwell, nearer to Banbury, where the usual crops were cereals and pease, Sir Anthony Cope had 100 acres under woad in 1585. As Joan Thirsk has pointed out in her *Economic Policy and Projects* (Clarendon Press, 1978, pp.21-22), such a large acreage would have required seasonal labour to be brought in from neighbouring parishes, as it has been estimated that one acre of woad provided work for four people during the busy weeding and picking season. One of the aims may have been to provide work for the poor. At Broughton, woad and other new crops such as flax, hops, sainfoin and clover were being grown from the seventeenth century onwards.

The Warwickshire Record Office has an unpublished article, probably written in the 1930's, entitled 'Woad Growing in Fenny Compton' by Edith Westacott (ref. B.Com.Fen.WES (p)). Flemish Huguenots are believed to have introduced woad into that parish in the sixteenth century. There is a house in the village called Woad House which, to judge by a window in the decorated style, dates at least in part to the fourteenth century. It is, or was, generally known as the Wodd.

Over the next several decades there was a long learning process before the best routine for growing woad was found. As a biennial, it did not fit into the annual rotations of the old open field system, and it was not wanted in mainly arable areas or on rich permanent pasture more suitable for dairying or livestock feeding. But, as an exhausting crop, it was useful on pastures that had deteriorated, which could be ploughed for woad and then followed by a cereal crop for two or three years before being returned to grass. Centuries of grazing made the soil too rich to be followed immediately by cereals, but woad took some excessive richness out of the soil and helped get rid of soil pests extremely destructive of corn. The land could then be ploughed again for woad in fifteen to twenty years' time. Examples of this long rotation occur in Farthinghoe, N'hants., where woad was grown 1649-51, 1695-6, 1718-26 and possibly again *c.*1780, and also in Farnborough, Warw., where there were woadmen/sojourners in the registers 1680-81, 1709-11 and again from 1757-1762.

The Woad Plant and its Cultivation

Woad in its first year looks much like spinach beet and in its second year it throws up a single stem with a head of yellow flowers. It needed careful weeding to encourage growth, and in favourable conditions yielded four to five crops a year. Leaves were picked from June onwards, largely by women and children, taken to a horse-powered mill and ground to a pulp. This was formed into balls or wads, which were placed in open-sided drying racks or ranges to dry in the air. When dry, the wads were powdered and wetted again and then fermented or 'couched' to bring out the colour by oxidisation. This was a skilled and smelly process, and the odour permeated the workmen's clothes and skin. The resulting clay-like substance was then packed into barrels to be sent to dyers. Sometimes the couching process was not carried out on the site, but the dry wads were packed into casks for couching by the dyers. Woad from the Banbury area was probably sent to dyers in Banbury

itself or in the neighbouring villages of Broughton or Shutford or to Stratford, or to the textile areas of Lancashire, Yorkshire and the Cotswolds. The article about Fenny Compton refers to the casks being sent by canal.

A select portion of the woad crop would be left over winter to flower the following year to produce seed for future use. It was a crop which required capital and a sufficient acreage to keep at least one mill occupied, so tended to be grown by the larger farmers and landowners, and later by specialist woad growers who paid the landowner an extraordinary rent for 2-3 years. In the early nineteenth century there are reports of 25, 50 and 70 acres being grown. There is an account of how one early nineteenth century woad grower, a Mr Neal of Watford, N'hants., organised his business. He rented 25 acres of pasture 'to grow woad for four years successively upon sward, after being in the first instance pared and burnt. Mr Neal brings his own servants with him; and upon a spot of ground near to the land which he hires, he erects a millhouse and mill for bruising the woad, as soon as it is cut and carried from the ground where it grows; and near this house are huts, built of turf and wood, for the families which he brings with him. Here they remain as a colony for four years, during which time they look out for another portion of sward land, to be cultivated in the same manner' (extract from the *General View of the Agriculture of Bucks.* by the Rev St John Priest, 1813, Chapter 6, Crops section xxxiv).

How I Became Interested in Woad

Twelve years ago I knew virtually nothing about woad and the people who grew it except that I had read that they moved from parish to parish. My interest was aroused when a family historian from Yorkshire, who shared my interest in the surname Pickering, asked if I would look up a couple of events in the Maidwell, N'hants., register, and I discovered Pickerings described as 'of the woad' or 'sojourners', and other people as 'woadman'. I realised that the woad-people's peripatetic way of life would mean that tracing ancestors associated with woad would be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack, particularly in Northamptonshire, which is so poorly covered in the International Genealogical Index (IGI). When I discovered that the Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO) had a file on woad, including an index of woad-people, I thought it would be interesting to try and expand this index. The original index of woad-people covered forty parishes in N'hants.,

mainly across the middle of the county, and three in Rutland. It included about 175 events from bishop's transcripts (BTs) and parish registers, mainly from the eighteenth century, and about sixty surnames.

Expanding the Original Woad Index

One of my first steps in attempting to expand the index was to appeal for help through the journals of family history societies. Mrs Peggy Edmond, a trained historian, wrote that she had already been searching her Jeacock woadmen ancestors for three years and had an article up her sleeve. This appeared in *Footprints*, the journal of the Northamptonshire Family History Society (NFHS) in July 1988 under the title 'Was Your Ancestor an Ancient Brit?'. Later Peggy sent me a chronological list of the Jeacock events she had found in Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire with indications of those who could positively or probably be identified as woad-people. This proved invaluable in locating other woad-people, who tended to travel in family groups and marry within the woad community. People with special knowledge of other surnames such as Vines, Lawson, Marlow, Pickering and Powell sent information which helped to extend my knowledge of where and how woad was grown. Other people sent extracts from parish registers, or information about woad from other sources. I am grateful for all the help received.

Originally I compiled the index manually and collected events from Northamptonshire and all the adjacent counties, but in late 1998 two members of the NFHS sorted over 2,000 woad-related events from Northamptonshire into a database for me, and I wrote an introduction and notes on individual parishes (a few from within the Banbury area). Copies are now at the NRO and with the NFHS. The information has been included in the NFHS Personal Name Database. I now have my own computer and aim to produce a second database concentrating on parishes in southern Northamptonshire, many of them within a 12-mile radius of Banbury. Experience gained in working on *Woad Index 1* has helped me to tackle a new area, and to some extent, to move into an earlier period. It would be satisfying if I could get at least some information to fill in the gap between 1585 and my earliest events *c.*1640.

Expanding the Index into a New Area

Before going into detail about parishes in the Banbury area and some of the documents I have found most useful, I will suggest a few tips for anyone searching their own woad-people ancestors or thinking of starting an index for their special area. I recommend starting from known

woad parishes and familiarising oneself with the recurring names and typical descriptions. The original woad index contained only a handful of events from around Banbury - two from Culworth, two from Blakesley and one from the Hinton-in the-Hedges register. A further look at Blakesley revealed eight more references to woad 1697-1699, about 25 years earlier than the original extracts. The Culworth BTs contain two baptisms to Henry Pickering, woadman, and his wife Mary during the same five-year period as the two original entries, almost certainly ancestors of my Yorkshire correspondent. The event in the Hinton register was a marriage between two people 'of Farthinghoe wadground'. The little word 'of' can be so helpful in leading from one register to another. The Farthinghoe registers proved a fruitful source of information.

Among the surnames recurring most frequently in the Banbury area are: **Burrows**, **Davies**, **Dickens**, **Green**, **Jeacock**, **Holland**, **Howen**, **Johnson**, **Lawson**, **Meacock**, **Neal(e)**, **Peberty**, **Pickering**, **Powell**, **Richardson**, **Steans** (and variants), **Thomas**, **Thompson**, **Vaughan**, **Vicars/Viggers** and **Vines**. Those originating outside the area, such as Jeacock, Howen, Pickering, Powell and Vaughan, are easier to pick out as probably belonging to woad-people than names such as Green, Neal, Johnson or Thompson, and may well lead to the recognition of other likely woad-people in the same period.

Descriptions of woad-people may begin with woad, wad(d), wodd, oade or the ambiguous 'wood', and I usually try to double-check the last. Actual descriptions include woadman, woadwoman, wadder, wadpeople, woad-dresser, labourer at the woad, of the woad cabins/cabbens or grounds, or they may be called 'sojourners' or by other ambiguous expressions such as travellers, vagrants or 'wandering people' (Byfield register), which may also apply to gypsies. Some workers in the woadgrounds may simply be called labourers. It has to be pointed out that occupations are not given in every case. A father may be described as woadman at one baptism, but not at another a couple of years later. Some registers contain virtually no occupations. This is why it is so important to familiarise oneself with the recurring 'woad' names, and, if possible with the full names of some couples, *e.g.* William & Abigail Lawson, Robert & Mercy Jeacock, Roger & Elizabeth Jeacock, William & Elizabeth Steans and Herbert & Mary Vaughan. These will serve as indicators to help find other woad-people. The Burton Dassett register is exceptional in having set aside three pages (after burials for 1788) for

'people belonging to the woad'. These pages record 37 baptisms, marriages and burials during the period 1698-1712. This is invaluable for cross-referencing with registers such as those of Brackley and Marston St Lawrence which mention occupations infrequently. With such registers I attempt to extract events which probably relate to woad-people, but I realise I may sometimes make mistakes.

Indexes and lists of various kinds may also be useful in looking for woad-people, *e g.* marriage indexes, the indexes of parish register transcripts, marriage licences (which may give occupations both of groom and bondsman which do not appear in the registers), Poor Law records, Militia Lists, possibly wills and administrations and, of course, the IGI, which I frequently use in preparation for a visit to a record office.

Maps and field names are sources which are also relevant. John Field's *English Field Names – A Dictionary* (Alan Sutton, 1989) mentions Wad(d) Grounds at Banbury and Wardington, Oxon., and Farnborough, Warw. Hook Norton, Oxon., had a Wadbridge Furlong in 1739. This set me searching for other clues on maps. Broughton, Oxon., has a Woad-mill Farm. At Culworth, N'hants., near Trafford Bridge over the infant River Cherwell, there is a Wadground Barn, which would probably have been used to house a horse-powered woad-mill not only for Trafford Grounds (a detached part of Byfield parish, three miles from the actual village) but also Edgcote, Culworth and possibly Wardington. River valleys were favoured areas for woad, and if woad was grown on one side of a river, it was likely to have been grown also on the other side.

Woad Parishes near Banbury

The Burton Dassett 'woad pages' include the recurring names: Jeacock, Johnson, Lawson, Powell, Richardson, Steans and Thomas. Not only do the events therein help to identify woad-people in other registers, but are important in helping to extend my index from the eighteenth century into the seventeenth century. It seems that some of the events, including the first burial, of Mary wife of Richard Burrows, relate to people from the next parish of Fenny Compton. An interesting parish to search was Farthinghoe. Originally I used the BTs, until I came across a batch of baptisms where the infants' parents were not named. However, many of the surnames were familiar, and in particular there was a Mercy Johnson, and Peggy Edmond had asked me to keep a lookout for a Mercy born about 1720-21. On looking at the fiches of the

actual register (NRO 123 p/2), between 1718 and 1725 there were the baptisms of fifteen infants to named parents, all described as 'belonging to the woad'. This serendipity makes the research worthwhile. References to woad in this parish go back to 1649. Whilst the register generally contains more information than the BTs, the latter do contain two references to 'a Wad Girle' which do not appear in the actual register. Other surnames include Neal, Green, Howen, Thomas and Thompson. In 1703 there were six references to 'wad people at Trafford' in the Byfield register. Four of the couples appear also in the Burton Dassett woad pages. In 1736 at Edgcote, on the Oxfordshire border, there were three baptisms to couples named Neal and Vaughan, typical 'woad' names and the only entries for these names in the transcript, which suggests they were 'sojourners'. The Marston St Lawrence registers have been burnt, but the BTs contain the marriage in 1739 of James Neale to Mary Vines, described as 'wadd people'. Although there are no other references to woad, I have extracted about twenty events for the period 1719-1742 which almost certainly relate to woad. The surnames include Jeacock, Neale, Steanes, Vaughan and Vines. At least some are identified as woad-people in Farthinghoe, Whittlebury or other registers. Among the woad-people in the Farnborough, Warw., registers, already referred to as an example of a long rotation, there is a Jeacock, a Dickens, a Thomas and, in 1757, a Fulk Button who had previously been in Abthorpe, Upton-by-Northampton and Dorton, Bucks. The Moreton Pinkney register, which has been transcribed for the period 1641-1723, contains no references to woad, but there are at least two periods, *c.*1684 and 1700-1704, when the register contains known woad-people with the surnames Vines, Vicars, Jeacock and Neal. This parish was originally searched because the NRO's marriage licence index shows that Joseph Vines 'of Moreton Pinkney' and Thomas Vines 'of Hawes [Halse] in the parish of Brackley' were both married at Harrington, N'hants., in the early 1700's. Joseph Vines, by 1709 of Market Overton, Rutland, was bondsman for Thomas. Joseph son of Richard and Jocaster Vines was baptised at Moreton Pinkney in 1684. Jocasta Vines 'woadwoman' was buried in 1705 at Market Overton and Richard Vines and Margett Rider were married there in 1707 as 'wod people of this parish' (incidentally Margett was in the IGI as Margett Wod, which shows how important it is to check original records). Hinton-in the-Hedges and Steane are adjacent parishes, with the church at Hinton serving both. Steane seems to have been a base for woad-people in the early eighteenth century. William

Jeacock junr, 'a woadman of Steane', was married by licence at Banbury in 1731 to Jane Green of Banbury. Jane Jeacock was buried at Wroxton, Oxon., in 1736 as 'one of the woad-women'. It looks as if Lord North's family may have been among the landed gentry who had woad grown on their land. The Helmdon register mentions 'wadd grounds' in both Stuchbury (see below) and the hamlet of Falcutt. These are among a number of sparsely-populated areas where woad was grown. Others were Steane, Edgcote, Halse and Burton Dassett. In some cases the landowners had destroyed houses or let them decay to make way for sheepwalks.

Reconstructing Families

There was always the risk that when a period of work came to an end the woad-people might become a burden on the parish where they had been working. In 1735 there was a note in the Charwelton register that 'no child was born at the woad, whilst it continued here... that no person may hereafter demand a settlement in this parish upon that claim'. An agreement at the NRO[1] stipulates that the woadman should take his workers with him when the period of the agreement expired. This may have been hard on the people concerned, but removal orders and settlement certificates under the Poor Laws are among the most useful documents for the family historian searching woad-people. They have been very important documents in helping to reconstruct families and to trace their movements over three or more generations. Three of these families moved in and out of the Banbury area.

Peggy Edmond discovered with the help of two separate settlement papers that her 4 x gt-grandfather Samuel Jaycock/Jeacock was the son of 'woad-croppers'. By systematic research, and with the help of wills predating parish registers, she was able to trace her woad-people ancestors through the Farthinghoe, Farnborough, Byfield and Burton Dassett registers back to younger sons of younger sons *ad infinitum* of a land-owning Warwickshire family.

A major step in my own research was in 1992, when Eve McLaughlin sent me an extract from the Buckinghamshire Quarter Sessions records for 12 January 1726/7. William Johnson, his wife Mercy and their six named children, were ordered to be removed from Haversham, Bucks., to the sparsely-populated parish of Stuchbury, N'hants., where he had been born at the Wadd Ground, where his father lived and worked as a

[1] John Ashley papers in the Monckton (Fineshade) collection dated 1749 between Edward Davis, woadman, and John Ashley of Ashby St Ledgers.

Wadder. He had been left an orphan at the age of about four years and since then had moved about the country, living in the counties of Buckingham, Northampton, Warwick and Bedford, following his father's trade and living in a Wadd Cabin all the time. He had been baptised 9 April 1671. His wife Mercy had previously been married to a William Cox. When I discovered in the 1777 Militia List that Stuchbury had only three men plus the constable, I envisaged the Johnsons being returned to a parish unable to support them. However, their destination was changed in July 1727 to Brill, Bucks., a known woad parish. I thought that if I could trace this family's movements, it would lead me to other woad-people. William's baptism was eventually found in the Helmdon register (Stuchbury having no church) as son of George 'born at Stutchbury Wadd Ground'. Edward Johnson son of George and Elizabeth 'of Stutchbury' was baptised a year earlier. I found the baptisms of William and Mercy's three youngest children at Haversham between 1723 and 1726. There the matter rested until 1998 when I had a look at the Farthinghoe registers and discovered the baptism of Mercy Johnson daughter of William and Mercy on 1 May 1721. I had not only found a fourth Johnson child for whom I had been looking, but a Mercy for whom Peggy Edmond was looking. It was Peggy who pointed out to me that Jeacocks and Johnsons were travelling together at Burton Dassett, though William was then married to a Jane. It was not surprising if, at 54, William had been married before, as had his wife Mercy. William and Jane Johnson baptised two children at Blakesley, N'hants., two at Burton Dassett and a son William in 1709 at Great Houghton, N'hants.

In 1815 another couple, Francis and Rebecca Powell, with their six children aged from 17 years down to William (2 years) and Thomas (three months), were ordered to be removed from Fenny Compton to the small parish of Glendon, N'hants. This Francis was the grandson of another Francis, born at Thornby, N'hants., in 1718, who became Superintendent of the Woad People at Brixworth, N'hants., in the 1770's. He had at least two brothers, Mark baptised at Burton Dassett in 1709, and Thomas baptised at Lutterworth, Leics., in 1711, both of whom became woadmen. Their parents were Mark Powell and Jane Bumford who were married by licence at Towcester in 1706. This is as far back as the Powell family has been traced to date, but it is tantalising that there were various other Powells in the Banbury area, *e.g.* at Broughton, Bloxham, Deddington and Barford St Michael, which I have not so far

been able to identify as woad-people. There was also a Francis Powell of Tysoe, Warw., who married at Banbury itself in 1723, but the only woadman in the occupations index is the William Jeacock junr married there in 1731. Francis and Rebecca Powell were nonconformists. No baptism has been found for Thomas aged 3 months, but the IGI records the baptism of William son of Francis and Rebecca Powell at Church Lane Wesleyan Church, Banbury in 1813. I understand that the register of this church has not been transcribed for events relating to people from outside the town of Banbury. It seems at least possible that the family was then living at Fenny Compton and attending a chapel associated with the church in Banbury, or perhaps they walked the eight miles to Banbury on Sundays. The article on woad growing in Fenny Compton says that the woad farmer in John Lines' early days was called Powell (John Lines was probably baptised in 1804 [IGI]). The old man remembered three turf huts which stood on the Woad Farm.

These reconstructions illustrate the fact that woad-people tended to stay in the business generation after generation, passing on their skills from father to son. It is a characteristic which makes it possible to use family history methods to build up a picture of this specialised branch of agriculture, in spite of the movements from one parish to another.

Decline of the Woad Industry

From as early as the late sixteenth century there had been some competition from imported indigo, which gave a stronger blue and was less expensive, but woad was grown on suitable land throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and particularly up to 1750. Woad was still grown in at least two places in the Banbury area, Broughton and Fenny Compton, in the nineteenth century. Dyers themselves held the view that woad was needed with indigo to aid fermentation in the woad vat and make a longer-lasting dye than indigo alone. More serious competition arose with the creation of artificial indigo in the chemical laboratory in the late nineteenth century, but woad continued to be grown by a devoted few farmers on the rich soils of the Lincolnshire fens until the last crop was harvested in 1932.

I should like to thank Dr Joan Thirsk for reading this article and for the help she has given me during my research. I also thank all those people who have sent me information on woad and woad-people, and ask that anyone coming across such information in the future will pass it on to me (Mrs Vivien Billington, 502 Wellsway, Bath, BA2 2UD).

MISS BROMLEY'S SCHOOL IN THE 1930's-40's

Dorothy Harrison (née White)

Apologies for the length of time which has elapsed since John Cheney's article appeared in the 1996 'Cake and Cockhorse'. I actually read the article several years later when my brother, Norman, revisiting Banbury, bought a copy and passed it on to me.

I started at Miss Bromley's school in July 1939, when I was just five, and my brother probably a couple of years later. My father, George White, taught at the then Banbury County School, as my mother, Kate Holloway, had done before her marriage. We left Banbury for Nottingham in 1943, so my knowledge of the geography of Banbury is decidedly rusty!

At first my mother came with me for the mile or so walk from our house at 117 Bloxham Road to Miss Bromley's. This must have meant wheeling Norman along in his push chair, though I don't remember this. After a few weeks my mother decided I could manage the walk to school alone. Timidly I asked how I would manage to cross the main road near Banbury Cross and was told I must ask an adult to take me across. I did this the next day, and from then on made the journey alone. My mother continued to meet me at the end of the day, together with the mothers of other pupils: Joy Sanderson (whom I am still in touch with), Angela Rose, Ann and Rachel Woodruff, Wendy Evesham. The route I took passed the interestingly named Beargarden Road, and the even more intriguing pub called 'The Case Is Altered', which I remember being told once had something to do with Cromwell.

The staff

Miss Palmer was the gentle and pleasant teacher of the little class. When you arrived in the morning you were expected to change into indoor shoes, a ritual I had no problems with but which my brother objected to strongly on his first day. He flatly refused to take his shoes off and started yelling, and I was sent for to quieten him down.

The small-sized tables we sat at had a groove all the way along the top. In this you would put whatever pips you scored during the day, each pip representing one mark. You would then collect them in your individual matchbox and count them at the end of the day. I still

Left to right: Me, Joy Sanderson, Angela Rose, unknown, Wendy Evesham, Ann Woodruff.

Me, aged about 8.

remember mine: it had a picture of a yellow towel with a red background on one side, and a bunch of snowdrops on the other. Presumably you started afresh next day, or perhaps each new week.

Looking at our school reports for this period I am amused that both Norman and I were each judged to have 'a tuneful little voice'. and later that I was 'helpful in the little action songs'. No seriously adverse criticism was made, though one might be tempted to see one in the contrast between 'Has made a good beginning' and the balder 'Has made a beginning'.

Miss Stevens

I also remember Miss Stevens, who taught the middle class, as rather strict, and the downstairs classroom as gloomy. I disliked the P.E. class, known as Drill, because of the disruption of moving desks back, and because I had problems co-ordinating my actions with Miss Stevens' taps. She also insisted on etiquette. If you wanted to go to the toilet, you put up your hand and asked 'Please may I be excused?' One day John Trust called out 'Can I go to the lavatory?' which scandalised Miss Stevens and the rest of the class.

One day I had to stay in after school to write out ten times 'I must not talk in class'. I was particularly upset as Anthony Kenyon had asked me to tea. He gallantly said he would wait while I wrote them out, which I laboriously – and tearfully – did.

Miss Steven's reports were more critical. My Geography 'Needs more thought', in Handwork I 'Could work harder', and my Drill was only 'Very fair'.

Miss Bromley

Miss Bromley taught the top class in the main classroom upstairs, an airy room with lots of windows. On one wall was a large print of a bearded Jesus seated, with children of all nations clustered round his knee. There was a Chinese child with a pigtail, an Indian in a sari, and a black child in some more exiguous costume. I vaguely grasped the principle, that Jesus loves children of all races, but was puzzled to see its relevance in the small country town of Banbury, where exotic nationals were decidedly thin on the ground.

I loved sums in the garden shed in the summer. Unlike John Cheney I can't remember either the lessons or the methods used, but I have happy memories of bright sunshine, flowers and butterflies in the garden and

the warm feel of the sun on the metal walls. Moving outdoors seemed to herald the beginning of sunny days and the summer.

Miss Bromley would read to us, usually in the afternoon. One particular day she read from one of the 'Milly Molly Mandy' books. I knew the story well because I had the book at home. MMM is ill in bed, and her mother, to amuse her, suggests she tie a little basket to the window catch and let it down on a string. Her mother then puts some little treat in the basket and MMM pulls it up. My attention wandered. It was a hot afternoon, and, like John Cheney, I watched the thread of spittle which formed between Miss Bromley's prominent upper and lower teeth. Every now and then it would break and re-form. It was quite uncanny to read of another pupil who remembers this too!

Years later I went with Joy Sanderson to visit Miss Bromley, then an old lady. She recalled how on one occasion the whole school was led by the staff through the streets to be inoculated at the clinic, presumably against diphtheria. Apparently I was terrified at the prospect, kept close to Miss Bromley all the way, and talked non-stop to cover my panic.

I left in July 1942 to go on to Dashwood Road School. My years at Miss Bromley's were very happy ones, and the small scale and friendliness of the school made a very gentle introduction to the education system. My brother has also drawn attention to the wide range of subjects offered in the curriculum. Our reports for Miss Stevens' class lists the subjects as: Spelling, Literature, History, English Language, Geography, Scripture, Reading, Composition, Dictation, Writing, Arithmetic, Nature Lessons, Drawing, Handwork, Drill, Recitation and Singing. I doubt if many primary schools now offer such variety. I am grateful to Miss Bromley and her staff, and would be delighted to hear from anyone who was at school with Norman or me (Mrs D.M. Harrison, The Old Anchor, 101 South Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2BU).