THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF BANBURY BETWEEN 1830 AND 1880

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Barrie Trinder

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ABBREVIATIONS

BA	Banbury Advertiser
BCR	Banbury Co-operative Record
BG	Banbury Guardian
BH	Banbury Herald
BHS	Banbury Historical Society
Bod.Lib.	Bodleian Library
B of H Mins.	Minutes of Banbury Board of Health
BPL	Banbury Public Library
BPLC Mins.	Minutes of Banbury Paving and Lighting Commissioners
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
BRA Mins.	Minutes of Banbury Reform Association
C & CH	Cake and Cockhorse
JOJ	Jackson's Oxford Journal
JRASE	Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England
MI Mins.	Minutes of Banbury Mechanics' Institute
NH	Northampton Herald
OC & CC	Oxford City and County Chronicle
OH	Oxford Herald
ORO	Oxfordshire Record Office
ORS	Oxfordshire Records Society
PC	Potts Collection
Pol.Corres.(1832)	Political Correspondence (1832)
PRO	Public Record Office
RC	Rusher Collection
VCH	Victoria County History

'....those less marked vicissitudes which are constantly shifting the boundaries of social intercourse and begetting new consciousness of interdependence. Some slipped a little downward, some got higher footing: people denied aspirates, gained wealth, and fastidious gentlemen stood for boroughs; some were caught in political currents, some in ecclesiastical, and perhaps found themselves surprisingly grouped in consequence; while a few personages or families that stood with rock firmness amid all this fluctuation were slowly presenting new aspects in spite of solidity, and altering with the double change of self and beholder. Municipal town and rural parish gradually made fresh threads of connection - gradually, as the old stocking gave way to the savings-bank,....Settlers, too came from distant counties, some with an alarming novelty of skill, others with an offensive advantage in cunning'.

George Eliot.
Middlemarch.

Chapter One.

A Mature Market Town.

'The old market place ... is ... all alive with the busy hum of traffic, the agricultural wealth and the agricultural population of the district. From the poor farmer with his load of corn, up to the rich mealman and the great proprietor, all the "landed interest" is there, mixed with jobbers and chapmen of every description, cattle dealers, millers, brewers, maltsters, justices going to the Bench, constables and shopmen, apprentices, gentlemen's servants, and gentlemen in their own persons, mixed with all the riff-raff of the town, and all the sturdy beggars of the country, and all the noisy urchins of both'.(1)

The nineteenth century market town was a place of rendezvous and exchange, the venue for the circuit meeting, the synod or the camp meeting, for an aristocratic assembly or bourgeois soirée, a gathering-place for ardent Protestants or Protectionists, a point of convergence for carriers' carts, a place of muster for volunteer riflemen or dissident radicals. By the cattle pens in the market place or at the linen draper's counter, the amorphous abstractions of Victorian society took the form of real individuals. The 'landed interest' was a group of red-faced farmers sipping spirits at the principal inn, or a baronet passing in his carriage from the railway station to his country seat. Manufacturing interests were embodied by the representatives of Manchester textile houses, or local foundry-masters. The dark forces of Democracy were symbolised by Baptist shoemakers or free-thinking coal-heavers. At the

(1) Mary Russell Mitford, 'Belford Regis, or Sketches of a Country Town', Chambers's Edinburgh Review, IV, 1836, p. 170.

wharves and warehouses of the market town calicoes and fustians from the Miltons and the Coketowns were unloaded, to pass through the hands of drapers, tailors and dressmakers, to become the apparel of townspeople and agriculturalists. Pigs of iron and wrought-iron rods from Shutt End, Blaenavon or Old Park passed to foundrymen and millwrights who transformed them into chaff-cutters or threshing machines for the innovating agriculturalists of the district and for a wider world. In the market town rural labourers being shepherded by a hard-headed incumbent towards an emigrant ship, might pass the ascending spiralists of Victorian society, the representatives of firms making bottled stout or artificial manure, the itinerant lecturer making his living from discoursing on Slavery, teetotallism or Andrew Marvell, or the prosperous retailer, respected as a deacon, churchwarden or treasurer of a society for clothing the poor. It was in the market town that most of the consumer goods of mid-Victorian England were manufactured. As parliamentary constituencies such towns decided the composition of governments. In most market towns it was possible to observe every shade of the complex spectrum of English religion. In the majority a profusion of voluntary associations provided enlightenment, sustenance or amusement. The Victorian market town has not received from historians the attention that has been given to the urban metropolis, the manufacturing town or the countryside, yet a study of such a town is capable of illuminating the whole range of English society, both urban and rural, both Liberal and Conservative, both Dissenting and Anglican, both puritan and libertarian.

For some English market towns the mid-nineteenth century was a period of unusual prosperity and communal self-confidence. During the previous century the larger market towns, particularly

those which were served by water transport, had grown at the expense of the smaller centres.(1) The prosperity of agriculture before the Great Depression, and the lack of a national system for the manufacture and distribution of most consumer goods, created a demand for the shoes, the suits, the saddles and the sideboards made in market towns, as well as for the iron, cloth and coal delivered to them from the manufacturing districts. The religious and political tensions of market town society could prove a stimulus to innovation and enterprise. In some towns the political influence of aristocratic landowners was destroyed by the 1832 Reform Act. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, and the ability to set up local boards of health under the 1848 Public Health Act increased the opportunities which townspeople had to govern themselves. The proliferation of jobbing printers, and the growing numbers of local newspapers, particularly after the repeal of the Stamp Duties in 1855, together with the building of such meeting places as institutes, corn exchanges and town halls, enabled the citizens of small towns to debate with one another at great length. While the state provided only a minimum of relief for the needy, and the commercial provision of recreational activities was insignificant, voluntary societies influenced the lives of townspeople more profoundly than the actions of governments. The establishment of poor law unions, the building of railways, and the founding of voluntary associations covering wide areas, all increased the influence

(1) Alan Everitt, 'Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire: the Role of the Country Carrier', in Alan Everitt, ed., Perspectives in English Urban History, 1973, p. 216.

of market towns as a regional centre.

Not all market towns flourished in the mid-nineteenth century. Some remained 'sleepy hollows', small agglomerations of shops, visited by mere handfuls of carriers, with infrequent and declining markets, only one or two weak dissenting causes, and a few struggling voluntary societies.(1) Many such towns lost their parliamentary representation, if they ever enjoyed it, with the 1832 Reform Act. They were places which had declined, relative to the larger centres, in the eighteenth century, and, except in special circumstances, this decline continued in the nineteenth. Such towns, the Brackleys, the Bishop's Castles and the Market Bosworths, may be defined as 'immature' market towns.

This study is concerned with what may be termed a 'mature' market town, a community which flourished in the nineteenth century. Such communities are best defined by functions rather than by size. They were, within their own regions, dominant centres of country carrying, and stood at the intersections of turnpike roads. They had access to water transport, and, by the 1850s, to railways. Such towns were capable of producing any commonly-used consumer goods, except those like pottery or hosiery, for which there were already national markets. They were financially independent with their own banks. Their jobbing printers and newspapers made them culturally self-sufficient. Such towns were self-governing, with their own corporations, parliamentary representation and boards of health, and were usually the centres of poor law unions. They had many voluntary organisations, and congregations

(1) 'Cowfold', described in chapter XVI of Mark Rutherford, The Revolution in Tanners Lane, 1887, pp. 230-50, is an example of this type of town.

of all the major religious denominations. Some such communities were cities which combined the functions of a regional market centre with those of a manufacturing town, a resort, an academic community, a seaport or a county town. The status of a market town is probably best indicated by the number of carriers who served it, and Table One shows how places which differed considerably in their total populations, could be remarkably similar in terms of their market functions. The mature market town was not dependent on resort dwellers, county or diocesan administration or large scale manufacturers, although such activities might flourish there. Places like Cambridge, Leicester, Exeter or Cheltenham were in every sense mature market towns, but their roles as regional centres were combined with many others, which makes it as difficult to see them just as market towns as it is to see Birmingham and Manchester purely as canal ports.(1)

Banbury stands on the frontiers of southern England and the Midlands, of the Cotswolds and the Eastern Counties, in Oxfordshire, but on the borders of Northamptonshire and Warwickshire, and within a short distance of Buckinghamshire, Worcestershire and Gloucestershire. It had a population of less than 9,000 in 1891. Towns of this size were often no more than local centres, places with one main street and only two significant shops of each trade,(2) but Table One shows that as a market centre Banbury was comparable with Ipswich, Leicester or Exeter, places of much greater size. Banbury is

(1) J. D. Porteous, Canal Ports: the Urban Achievement of the Canal Age, 1977, pp. 31, 34-35.

(2) Mark Rutherford, Autobiography and Deliverance, 1969 edn., pp. 26-27.

important because it was a town which was primarily a regional market centre, and had no other significant economic functions. It was an excellent anatomical specimen of the genus. It was not pampered into corpulence by aristocratic bounty, nor was it lulled into indolence by providing goods and services to rich elderly spinsters or fundholding survivors of merchant adventuring or colonial wars. Its back was not bowed by fawning obeisance to sheriffs, grand jurors and deputy lieutenants. Its muscles were not overdeveloped by an undue concentration of one manufacturing industry, nor were its limbs stunted by obstacles of water or mountains. What happened in Banbury between 1830 and 1880 is in a real sense an aid to the understanding of English society during that period. Just as towns like Ludlow, which has seen few changes in its buildings during 150 years, or Bath, which grew up to serve one predominant function, powerfully illuminate the history of most towns, so nineteenth century Banbury, because it was a pure and unadulterated market town, reveals much about market towns in general, about the Nottinghams and the Newcastles, as well as the Bridgnorths and the Brackleys.

Banbury would have been a different community if it had not enjoyed its own parliamentary representation. It was one of about 170 roughly similar constituencies, places which largely determined which party dominated the House of Commons.(1) A study of politics in Banbury thus helps to explain how certain types of MP came to be elected and how their behaviour at Westminster was influenced by their constituents, but politics

(1) John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857 - 1868, 1966, p. 118.

are accorded a prominent place in this study for other reasons. Margaret Stacey remarked of Banbury in the late 1940s: 'parliamentary election campaigns appear to perform a most vital function of the "safety valve" variety. They provide a licence to say in public about a political opponent or his policies what it is otherwise taboo to say'.(1) This was as true in the nineteenth century as in the twentieth. Politics did not dominate peoples' minds for every minute of every year, but the groups formed and the language used at elections revealed the underlying divisions within the community and the tensions which existed between them.

As well as being a good anatomical specimen of a market town, Banbury was also an archetypal polarised community, one where, in the dynamic areas of society, the vertical divisions were of more consequence than the horizontal. Between 1830 and 1880 the division between Liberals and Dissenters on one side, and Anglicans and Conservatives on the other,(2) was productive of more creative and destructive energy than any divisions of society based on economic functions. There was in Banbury, as elsewhere, a profound awareness of the horizontal division between the respectable and the non-respectable, the 'one line which ran right through Victorian society'.(3) The division was not in essence one of economic function, and it was, for the individual, surmountable. The non-respectable were never a coherent social force in the period under review. The flash-points between respectable and non-respectable, the fairs, the

(1) Margaret Stacey, Tradition and Change: a study of Banbury, 1960, p.55.

(2) Ibid, pp.11-20, for manifestations of this split in the present century.

(3) G. Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, 1962, p.126.

race meetings, the boundary between the borough and Neithrop, produced skirmishes rather than warfare between classes. Divisions between masters and employees were relatively unimportant compared with those between reformers and traditionalists. The polarisation of bourgeois society had important consequences in politics and religion; it considerably influenced the local economy, and profoundly affected the activities of voluntary associations.

Mid-nineteenth century literature confirms that polarisation within market town communities was not unusual. This may in part explain the prosperity of the mature market town in the period, for such conflict, bruising and stultifying as it may have been to those who suffered from it, and insensitive and mystifying as it may appear in a more secular, less highly politicised age, could be creative, satisfying and a stimulus to democracy. The ironmonger who proposed his banker for election to parliament, the solicitor who argued against a clergyman's efforts to enforce Sabbath observance, the chemist who set down in a pamphlet his reasons for opposing ritualism, the shoemakers, weavers and railwaymen penning publicity for a co-operative society, were all members of a community in which every public action had to be justified. The fruits of this conflict may be seen in the proliferation of voluntary societies, in the critical view which was taken of every action by public bodies, and in the excellence sought by tradesmen seeking to lift themselves above the pressures of faction.

Literary evidence also suggests that the experiences of Banbury reflected those of market towns in general. Mark Rutherford's description of the town where he first served as a minister is of a less prosperous place than Banbury, but the sense of polarisation which comes from his writings obviously

fits the situation in Banbury.[1] The ironmongers and lawyers who appear in his novels could have been Banburians. Hollingford in Wives and Daughters, which was modelled on Knutsford, was superficially a very different town from Banbury,[2] yet there is much in Elizabeth Gaskell's novel which reflects the nuances of behaviour in Banbury. Hardy's Casterbridge was also a town whose rhythms were very similar to those in Banbury.[3] The methods used for provoking religious controversy in Milby in Janet's Repentence[4] were exactly those employed in Banbury, and in this and other novels, George Eliot mirrors better than any contemporary writer the feelings, hopes and experience which can be perceived from various sources as those of nineteenth century Banburians.

The sources for the study of nineteenth century Banbury are unusually rich. On Friday 13 June 1832 a printing press passed through Banbury in a procession celebrating the 'Triumph of Reform', and was followed by a banner proclaiming it 'The Reformer's Artillery' and the town's printers and bookbinders.[5] It is due largely to these printers that the records of Victorian Banbury are so profuse. By 1830 there were four or five master

(1) Mark Rutherford, Autobiography and Deliverance, 1969 edn., p. 211.

(2) Elizabeth Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, 1864-66 and subsequent editions.

(3) Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, 1886 and subsequent editions.

(4) George Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life, 1858 and subsequent editions.

(5) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949, facing p.116.

printers in Banbury, a number which remained more or less constant through the next 50 years, although the number of printing workers slowly increased. One printer, John Golby Rusher, published an annual Banbury List which originated in the eighteenth century and gave details of borough officials, fairs and transport services. From 1832 he accompanied it with a Directory, listing tradesmen in occupational groups, which appeared annually except in 1838 until the 1890s.(1)

'The very placards on the walls of the suburbs of Manchester announce the extraordinary variety and importance of the pursuits in which the population is engaged',(2) wrote J. G. Kohl in 1842. The poster, the broadsheet and the hand-bill were the means by which Victorian society conducted many of its arguments, and collections of such ephemera made by four Banbury printers have survived.(3) One includes 163 items published during the five month election campaign of 1832. In 1856 at least 25 posters and pamphlets appeared during a Sabbatarian controversy which lasted scarcely a month. Sources of this kind record activities unnoticed by the press, and the arguments of obscure individuals. In few periods was the printing press so easily available to the public as in the mid-nineteenth century. The value of poll books for the comparative study of different constituencies has been shown by

(1) Collections of Rusher's Lists and Directories are in the Bodleian Library, the Banbury Public Library and the Oxfordshire Local Studies Library, Westgate, Oxford.

(2) J. G. Kohl, Ireland, Scotland and England, 1844, p. 143.

(3) The Potts, Rusher and Walford collections are in Banbury Public Library. Cheney and Sons, Calthorpe Street, Banbury, keep a volume of 'Specimens of Work'.

several historians.[1] In Banbury, poll books were published for every contested parliamentary election between the Reform Act and the Ballot Act, and there is perhaps no constituency in England where the nuances of changes in political feeling can more precisely be measured.

Banbury's first newspaper was the Banbury Guardian, founded in 1838 as a monthly demy quarto four page sheet, intended to explain the new Poor Law.[2] In July 1843 it became a four-page, royal format, weekly, stamped newspaper, costing 5d. No other organ could economically serve Banbury's hinterland. Each of the adjacent counties had two or more papers of conflicting political views, and it was previously necessary to advertise in all of them to ensure coverage of the region. Following the repeal of the stamp duty in 1855 the price was gradually reduced until it was 2½d., in 1870. Circulation then increased three fold in five years, which enabled the proprietors to adopt a new eight page format in 1876.[3] The Guardian was the voice of the Liberal Reformers who came to power in Banbury in the 1830s.[4]

The Banbury Advertiser, launched in 1855 when the taxes on newspapers were repealed was the voice of militant dissenting

(1) John Vincent, Pollbooks: How Victorians voted, 1967, pp.1-33.

(2) Except where otherwise shown, information on newspapers is drawn from the British Museum Catalogue of Newspapers.

(3) BG, 6 July 1843; BG, 6 Jan. 1876; BG, 12 April 1888.

(4) See below pp110-125.

radicalism.(1) Circulation rose to about 1,200 following the paper's involvement in a controversy over the town cemetery, and in May 1856 it announced an enlarged format. The page size was again increased in 1859 when it claimed three times the circulation of any of its competitors. In 1876 the page size was reduced but the paper was increased from four to eight pages.(2) Associated with the Advertiser was the Banbury Beacon, a newspaper almost identical in editorial content, intended for a rural rather than a town readership.(3)

The Banbury Herald, Agricultural and Advertising Chronicle began publication in July 1861, proclaiming 'We are Conservatives. The constitution of England is our watchword'. For several years it was a well written mirror of the life of the town, but during 1863 its treatment of news became less thorough and from February 1864 it was incorporated with the Oxford Times, although it had a further spell as a separate newspaper between June 1867 and February 1869.(4)

The press was an integral part of Banbury society. There were few reporters other than proprietors and editors, and two of those listed in the 1871 census doubled as compositors.(5)

(1) For the repeal of the stamp duty see John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857 - 1868, 1966, pp. 58-64; C. D. Collett, The History of the Taxes on Knowledge, 1933 edn., pp. 126-34.

(2) BA, 5 July 1855; BA, 1 May 1856; BA, 6 Jan. 1859; BA, 6 July 1876.

(3) Banbury Beacon, 5 June 1868.

(4) BH, 3 Jan. 1861; BPL, PC IX, p.121, PC X, p.7.

(5) 1871 Census, PRO, RG 10.

The Guardian belonged to William Potts I, 'the father of Banbury journalism', who moved to the town from Daventry and established a printing and bookselling business about 1823. He became secretary of the Reform Association, a founder of the Mechanics' Institute, a councillor, a Unitarian and a magistrate. His sons John and William II followed him into the business, and when he retired in 1867 the former succeeded him as proprietor. William Potts III, son of John Potts succeeded as editor in 1892 and ran the paper until 1947.(1) William Bigg, chemist, Quaker, councillor and founder of the Mechanics' Institute helped Potts to establish the Guardian. He moved to Banbury in 1834 and stayed for only a decade, but 'although still a young man, he quickly became valuable in all matters conducive to the welfare and progress of the town'.(2)

John Golby Rusher added printing to his father's bookselling business in 1808 when he was 28 years old. He was soon absorbed into the oligarchy which then ruled Banbury, becoming an Alderman, a magistrate and a leading figure in the National Schools, the Bible Society and the Savings Bank. The triumph of the Liberals in the 1830s prevented him from ever again being so directly involved in local government, but his collection of ephemera, including such personal items as his first membership card for the Mechanics' Institute, is of great

(1) Details of the Potts family are drawn from William Potts, A History of Banbury, 1958, pp.v-vii; BG,14 Feb.1867; BG,14 Mar. 1867; BA,14 Mar.1867; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; the baptismal registers of Banbury Presbyterian Church; sundry census returns and inscriptions in Banbury cemetery.

(2) BG, 14 Mar. 1878; BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, pp. 103-04.

value.(1)

The Conservative Banbury Herald was probably published by William Clement Loxley, a draper whose shop was next door to the Herald printing office at 85 High Street. One of its editors was James Hutchings, a talented painter and cabinet maker.(2)

The printer who exemplified Banbury's radical traditions was George Walford. His father, John George Walford, was born at Tredington, Worcs., about 1787 and as a young man moved to Banbury to set up as a watchmaker. He was a Quaker but moved through the Church of England and the Independent congregation to join the Wesleyans.(3) His son, Henry, succeeded to the watchmaking business, but his eldest son George established a printing office in High Street in November 1842, and began to publish the Banbury Advertiser in 1855. For a time he employed as editor W. T. Henderson, the Baptist minister, who had been lodging with him in 1851.(4) William Ponsonby Johnson edited the paper for much of the 1860s. Walford also published local historical pamphlets and the

(1) Details of the Rusher family are drawn from BG, 8 Mar.1877; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; Sara Beesley, My Life, 1892; C. R. Cheney, 'Cheney and Sons: two centuries of printing in Banbury', C & CH, III, 9 1967, p.170. BPL, RC p.323.

(2) BA, 17 Feb. 1881.

(3) The account of J.G.Walford is drawn from the Banbury Baptismal Registers, the records of Banbury Independent Church, Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; George Herbert, op.cit., p.89; and sundry census records.

(4) Bod.Lib.G A Oxon.8° 990; Regents Park College Library, Oxford, W.T.Henderson, Recollections of his Life.

Banbury Beehive, a short-lived illustrated magazine.(1)

Banbury newspapers were so close to the events which they were describing that they sometimes deliberately avoided controversy. The Advertiser, in defending its failure to report the Sabbatarian dispute in 1856, declared:

> 'On some questions which from time to time have agitated the town, we have deemed it right to maintain a discreet silence. The Sabbath question has been thus passed by because thought unsuitable to the columns of a newspaper'.

The Guardian commented that a great feud had arisen about the Sabbath, the letters on which would not be published.(2) It is fortunate that newspapers published in the surrounding county towns also reported on Banbury.

Jackson's Oxford Journal rarely described events in Banbury in any detail, but from September 1831 until the beginning of 1836 the Oxford University, City and County Herald employed William Potts as its Banbury correspondent, and his reports provide a valuable Liberal interpretation of events in the town at a critical period. After the ownership of the Herald changed, the agency passed to the Conservative William Bloxham, and the tone of the reports changed. Later Alfred Beesley, the historian, reported for the Herald.(3) The radical Oxford City and County Chronicle, 'the weekly vehicle of the rancour and spite of the Tancred party'(4) as Beesley once

(1) BA, 5 Jan. 1860; BA, 9 Aug. 1860.

(2) BA, 3 July 1856; BG, 20 Mar. 1856.

(3) OH, 9 Sep.1831; OH, 20 Feb.1836; OC &CC, 11 July 1840; OC & CC, 31 July 1841.

(4) BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, p.103.

called it, treated affairs in Banbury with a racy irreverent scurrility. The best outside commentary on events in Banbury was provided by the Conservative Northampton Herald, established in 1831. One of its founders was Francis Litchfield, from 1817 until his death in 1876 incumbent of Farthinghoe, five miles from Banbury, and known as 'the most prominent, most amusing and in some ways the must useful man in the neighbourhood'. He was a 'furious Conservative', an energetic paternalist and enforcer of morality, who administered the old poor law with vigour, and organised movements of labourers to the colonies.(1) His sharp, thrusting, rapier-like prose, his powers of derisive vituperation, made incisions below the surface of events in Banbury far more revealing than those of writers resident in the town. He remained Banbury correspondent of the Herald until May 1859.(2)

The archives of the most important firm of Banbury solicitors are in the Oxfordshire Record Office,(3) and two important collections of political correspondence survive in Banbury Library.(4) The parish church documents include a

(1) For Francis Litchfield see BG, 14 Sep.1876; NH, 19 Oct. 1839; Thomas Mozley, Reminiscences, cheifly of towns, villages and churches, 1885, II, pp.281-82.

(2) BPL, PC VIII, p.228; BG, 19 May 1859.

(3) CRO, Stockton, Sons and Fortescue Collection, No. 315.

(4) BPL, Political Correspondence (1832); the Correspondence of Henry William Tancred, 1841-59. The latter is reproduced in Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents, 1969.

remarkable social survey carried out by the Revd. William Wilson about 1850.(1) Most of the dissenting congregations are well documented and the records of the Mechanics Institute survive in their entirety.

Banbury has been well served by its past historians. The History of Banbury by Alfred Beesley, published in 1841, is a work of outstanding quality.(2) The author was born in 1800, of Quaker parents and was apprenticed to a watchmaker, but 'easy pecuniary circumstances' enabled him to devote most of his life to literary and scientific pursuits. He was a good astronomer, botanist and geologist, and while writing his History corresponded with many leading scholars. He joined the Church of England in 1825, and after being an active Reformer in the early 1830s, became an ardent Conservative. The other nineteenth century history of Banbury by the journalist W. P. Johnson, published in 1862-63, is a much lesser work,(3) but that by William Potts III, which appeared in 1956, 11 years after the author's death, is almost an original source. The nineteenth century chapters are based on the author's own recollections, which began in the 1870s, and on those of Police Superintendent William Thompson and others, whom he

(1) Now in the Bodleian Library, MS. D.D.Par. Banbury a.5(R). The survey is described and analysed in Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966.

(2) For Beesley see, BG, 15 April 1847; NH, 17 April 1847; ORO, B.M.M.I/5,Banbury Monthly Meeting Minutes 1824-32, 5 12mo. 1825; E.R.C. Brinkworth, 'Alfred Beesley's History of Banbury', C & CH, II, 1, 1962, p.8.

(3) W. P. Johnson, A History of Banbury, n.d., circa 1862-63. For Johnson's background see BPL, PC IX, p.33.

interviewed for articles published in 1889.(1)

Recent writing on Banbury has also been of more than local consequence. Of particular importance is Margaret Stacey's study of the town in the late 1940s, which has become a sociological classic, and is fruitfully suggestive about the town in the nineteenth century.(2) Banbury is rich in memoirs, the autobiography of George Herbert, an unassuming shoemaker and photographer, and the recollections of the Baptist minister, W. T. Henderson, being of particularly high quality.(3) Since Banbury's hinterland extended to Juniper Hill, Barford and Tysoe, the town was the market centre for Flora Thompson, Joseph Arch and Joseph Ashby, and thus features in three of

(1) William Potts, A History of Banbury, 1958; BG, 21 Nov. 1889; BG, 26 Dec.1889; see also William Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942.

(2) Margaret Stacey, Tradition and Change; a study of Banbury, 1960; see also Margaret Stacey, Eric Batstone, Colin Bell and Anne Murcott, Power, Persistence and Change: a second study of Banbury, 1975; Audrey Taylor, Gilletts: Bankers at Banbury and Oxford, 1964; Michael Mann, Workers on the Move, 1973; The Victoria History of Oxfordshire, X, 1972.

(3) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949; Regents Park College Library, Oxford, W. T. Henderson, Recollections of his Life; see also, T. W. Boss, Reminiscences of Old Banbury, 1903; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892; Anon. (Elizabeth Redford), The Banbury Female Martyr, n.d. circa 1863; Thomas Champness, ed., A Memoir of Richard Edmunds of Banbury, n.d., circa 1895.

the most memorable books on the English countryside.(1)

A study of Banbury between 1830 and 1880 can throw light on a wide range of questions concerning the common experiences of many nineteenth century Englishmen, and about a certain type of urban community in particular. Such a study has also a local context. It is concerned with incidents in a town established before the Norman Conquest, to which Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln, added new streets in the twelfth century,(2) where the puritan William Knight gloated over the destruction of a cross in 1600,(3) where an aluminium factory was established in 1931,(4) and to which an instant coffee plant was re-located in 1965.(5) Banbury is a good anatomical specimen of a particular type of town at a particular period in history, but is also an individual town, shaped by its own past, and its consciousness of its own history, as well as by the topography and resources of its region.

(1) Flora Thompson, Lark Rise to Candleford, 1939 and subsequent editions; Joseph Arch, Joseph Arch: The Story of His Life, 1898 and subsequent editions; M. K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe 1859 - 1919, 1961.

(2) VCH Oxon X, p.6.

(3) The deposition of Matthew Knight, 1604; PRO, St.Ch.8/82/23, quoted in P. D. Harvey, 'Where was Banbury Cross?', Oxoniensia, XXXI, 1966, pp.101-06.

(4) Margaret Stacey, Tradition and Change, pp.8-9; VCH Oxon X, pp.68-69.

(5) Michael Mann, Workers on the Move, 1973.

Chapter Two.

Civic Pride and Parochial Squalor: Banbury and Neithrop 1830-50.

'The situation of Banbury is low; and though it exhibits a bustle of business ... there is something forbidding in its general aspect, owing to the narrowness and dirtiness of the streets'.

William Mavor, 1805[1]

'One of the cleanest, best regulated and most orderly towns in the kingdom'.

Martin Billing, 1854[2]

Banbury was a town at a cross-roads. In origin it was a Saxon manor of rather more than 4,500 acres, the centre of the north Oxfordshire estates of the Bishops of Dorchester which comprised the Banbury Hundred. The parish church, doubtless the centre of the original settlement, stood near the point where the ancient Jurasic Way crossed the main road from Oxford to Coventry, about half a mile from the bridge where the pre-historic route crossed the Cherwell. In the early twelfth century Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln,[3] built a castle between the church and the river, in front of which he laid out a market place and new streets where there had previously been fields. By 1167 Banbury was being described as a borough, and by the fourteenth century it was the second largest town

(1) William Mavor, A Tour in Wales and through Several Counties of England ... performed in the Summer of 1805, 1806, p. 162.

(2) Martin Billing, Directory and Gazetteer of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, 1854, p. 129.

(3) The see of Dorchester was transferred to Lincoln in 1072.

in Oxfordshire.(1)

Banbury's topography is best interpreted as a series of market places. Along the main north-south route were the wide streets of South Bar, the Horsefair and North Bar. The east side of the Horsefair was the traditional selling place for sheep. Bishop Alexander's Market Place was used for the general market, by butchers, and for the sale of pigs. Cattle were sold in the wide part of Bridge Street known as the Cowfair.(2) Banbury's defences in the Middle Ages consisted of the castle, its moat, four gates, and possibly a ditch linking them.(3) The last of the gates, the North Bar, was pulled down by a team of waggon horses in 1817. The position of the South Bar, demolished about 1765, was marked by an obelisk called the Monument, which was destroyed in 1843 because it was an 'eyesore' where weavers and tailors congregated in their lunch hours.(4) The castle, twice besieged in the Civil War, had been obliterated by 1685 and the site given over to vegetable gardens.(5)

(1) VCH, Oxon X, pp.1,5-6,18; M. D. Lobel, ed., Historic Towns, I, 1969, pp.1-3; Kirsty Rodwell, ed., Historic Towns in Oxfordshire: a Survey of the New County, 1975, pp.53-54; Peter Fashon, 'Banbury Castle: a Summary of Excavations in 1972', C & CH, V, 6, 1973, pp.109-16; Kirsty Rodwell, 'Excavations at Banbury Castle 1973-74: an Interim Report', C & CH, V, 9, 1974, pp.177-81.

(2) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949, pp. 91, 97.

(3) K. Rodwell, Historic Towns, p.53; M. D. Lobel, op.cit.,p.4.

(4) G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.53,74-75; NH, 24 June 1843; VCH, Oxon X, p.21.

(5) VCH, Oxon X, p.25.

There were five townships in the parish of Banbury. Wykham and Hardwick had contracted during the Middle Ages and in the nineteenth century were entirely agricultural. To the east of the Cherwell lay Grimsbury and Nethercote in Northamptonshire, which for civil purposes were often regarded as part of the parish of Warkworth. They were incorporated in the parliamentary borough of Banbury in 1832. Except for a cluster of cottages at the bridge foot, they were rural settlements, no more closely tied to Banbury than villages in other parishes.(1)

The relationship between Banbury and the townships of Neithrop and Calthorpe was more complex. The fields of the two hamlets were grouped together, possibly after an exchange of lands in the Middle Ages. Calthorpe may have formed part of the original vill of Banbury which later assumed the name and appearance of a distinct hamlet. No evidence survives of any formal boundary between Calthorpe and Neithrop. Whatever the tortuous medieval origins of these relationships, their implications for the nineteenth century town were profound. The nucleus of Neithrop was a group of ironstone cottages about 600 yards west of the parish church. Calthorpe consisted largely of Calthorpe Lane, whose two ends were in the municipal borough, and Calthorpe House, the ancient home of the Cobb family which stood in extensive pleasure grounds. There were

(1) K. J. Allison, M. W. Beresford and J. C. Hurst, Deserted Villages of Oxfordshire, 1975, pp.39, 47; VCH, Oxon X, p.5; Alfred Beesley, The History of Banbury, 1841, p.560n.

several isolated farmsteads in the hamlets, notably Easington, a grange which in the thirteenth century was the centre of the Bishop's demesne. From the sixteenth century all the Oxfordshire hamlets were incorporated in Neithrop, and the name Neithrop was applied to the whole of the Oxfordshire portion of the parish outside the borough.(1)

The borough of Banbury was granted its first charter of incorporation in 1554. It consisted of some 61 ill-defined acres.(2) A parliamentary commissioner observed in 1832:

> 'The extent of the borough is unusually limited, being confined (with the exception of one small field and a very inconsiderable property of garden grounds) to the space occupied by the streets and buildings of a part of the town. The limits of the borough, although well-known and admitted, do not appear to be very accurately defined'.(3)

The tithe map of 1852 shows a line of crosses approximating to the boundary, but it was not until the first edition of the 25 inch Ordnance Survey map was published in 1881 that it was accurately defined.(4) Every three years, on at least one

(1) VCH, Oxon X, pp.18, 27-38,51.

(2) VCH, Oxon X, p.5; Alfred Beesley, op.cit., p.561, says 105 acres; T. W. Rammell, Report on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Banbury and Neithrop, 1850, p.7, says 300 acres, but is clearly mistaken.

(3) Report of the Commissioners on the Proposed Divisions of Counties and Boundaries of Boroughs, BPP, 1832, XI, p.189.

(4) Bod.Lib. Tithe May 30, Parish of Banbury, 1852; VCH, Oxon X, pp.21-23; the best representation of the boundary on a modern map is in M. D. Lobel, op.cit. p.14.

To face p.24.

Map One.
THE BOUNDARY OF THE BOROUGH OF BANBURY, circa 1800 showing major medieval features.
From M.D.Lobel, ed., Historic Towns, I, 1969.

N

occasion on Guy Fawkes Day, there was a beating of the bounds, when white arrows were painted on walls to mark the limits.(1)

Until the late eighteenth century the built-up area of Banbury was probably no larger than it had been in the Middle Ages, but between 1801 and 1831 the population of the borough rose by 36 per cent from 2,755 to 3,737, and the population of Neithrop grew by 106 per cent, from 1,055 to 2,169. Building land in the borough was almost completely exhausted, and its population increased by only 8 per cent between 1831 and 1851, while that of Neithrop rose by 93 per cent. In 1801 Neithrop housed 26 per cent of the population of the parish, a proportion which increased to 34 per cent in 1831, and 48 per cent in 1851.(2)

Banbury was a town of small landowners where property was minutely sub-divided. A chief rent book for the borough in 1831 lists 179 properties which were owned by 117 different people and institutions. Only two solicitors with eleven and nine plots respectively, and a brewer with fourteen had more than four properties. Similarly there were many small proprietors in Neithrop.(3)

Banbury was in no sense a town of resort. Only 113 of the adults given occupations in the 1851 census, 2.74 per cent of the total, lived on investments, and the great majority were

(1) William Potts, A History of Banbury, 1858, p.238; BA, 11 Nov. 1858.

(2) See Table Two.

(3) ORO, B.B. LV/I, Chief Rent Book for the Borough of Banbury, Lady Day, 1831; VCH, Oxon X, pp.52-54.

the widows of tradesmen. If there were no pseudo-gentry, there were no Georgian terraces to accommodate them. Several of Banbury's handsome eighteenth century houses were empty for long spells around 1830,(1) and the magnificently formal appearance of South Bar is not due to Georgian planning, but to the realignment of the road in the 1820s and 30s, and to Victorian in-filling.

There were several notorious haunts of criminals, drunkards and prostitutes. Crown Yard in Bridge Street, Lodging House Yard in Calthorpe Lane, and Blue Pig Yard at the west end of High Street had especially bad reputations. In 1837 charitable societies were praised for extending their aid to 'the poor of the crowded yards' and in 1859, a brothel keeper from Blue Pig Yard who had formerly resided in Lodging House Yard insisted that he had 'generally worked for a living when living in these yards,'(2) as if the yards comprised a particular kind of place in which working for a living was exceptional. The buildings in Mill Lane comprised a well-known 'rookery', which was doubtless in the mind of the editor of the Northampton Herald in 1843 when he doubted the suitability of Bridge Street as a location for a school:

> 'those dens of filth and of immoral pollution which are no less disgraceful to the town than discreditable to the police ... and to the owners of the property that has long been so grossly and so degradingly abused'.(3)

(1) See Table Three; G. Herbert, op.cit., p.64.

(2) BG, 6 Jan. 1859; OH, 6 Jan. 1859.

(3) NH, 11 Mar. 1843.

Prostitution was continuously obtrusive. In 1849 the borough bye-laws provided for a fine of five shillings to be imposed on any common prostitute soliciting to the annoyance of passers-by, just as they laid down penalties for selling butter under weight or shaking carpets in daylight.(1) The 1851 census recorded two 'nymphs of the pave' at the Royal Oak in Calthorpe Street.

Another notorious source of moral infection was Waterloo, a terrace constructed in the second decade of the century at the bridge foot in Northamptonshire. In May 1834 'persons of bad character, pickpockets etc.' gathered in 'that great public nuisance called Waterloo'. In 1836 'that intolerable nuisance on the other side of Banbury gate, Waterloo Place' was blamed for a series of robberies. A court case in 1844 revealed that lodging houses at Waterloo accommodated criminals visiting Banbury races. Gentry from Northamptonshire considered buying and demolishing Waterloo, but this task was accomplished by the Great Western Railway in 1846. The destruction of the terrace, 'one of the greatest nuisances in the neighbourhood, for years the resort of vagrants and thieves', was widely welcomed.(2) The yards, Waterloo and Mill Lane were all close to the town centre, and the zeal of Banbury's social reformers has to be seen against a background of insulting behaviour by drunkards and soliciting by unsavoury prostitutes in the very heart of the town.

The suburbs of Banbury displayed many features characteristic

(1) ORO, BB/XX/i/2b, Miscellaneous papers re Sanitation.
(2) JOJ, 17 May 1834; NH, 19 Nov. 1836; BG, 22 Aug. 1844; BG, 21 May 1846; BG, 4 June 1846.

of most medium sized towns of the period. There were several large houses surrounded by private grounds which sealed considerable areas from development. Close to the town centre were the grounds of Calthorpe House, those behind John Wake Golby's house in High Street, and the gardens and fish ponds of Neithrop House, which served as a barrier between the hamlet of Neithrop and the town. 'Beechfields', the home of the solicitor John Munton, built in West Bar about 1830, had grounds large enough to accommodate flower shows.(1) There were gardens on the castle site, off the Warwick Road, and to the south and west of the town centre, which were let to such tenants as George Herbert's father, who was a weaver.(2) By 1832 brickmakers were working along the Drayton, Broughton and Middleton Roads using coal brought by canal.(3) Sand was also quarried, and off the Bloxham Road a poor quality roadstone was dug. About 1830 the costs of brick and local stone seem to have been about equal, and brick was regarded as the more fashionable material.(4) Working class cottages in Constitution Row and Southam Road of the 1820s and 30s have brick fronts and back walls in Hornton Stone. The elegant 'Beechfields' has a stucco front and a rear elevation of stone. Substantial numbers of bricks do not appear to have been imported before the closing years of the nineteenth century, but Welsh slates seem to have been used from the time the canal was opened. On

(1) G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.43,49,58,64,102; VCH, Oxon X,p.47.

(2) G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.39,42-46,49.

(3) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, 1832,1850; G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.45-46.

(4) VCH, Oxon X, p.34; G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.46,52.

the edges of the town were timber yards on the Green and in North Bar, drying racks for dyers in Warwick Road, osier beds on the Hardwick Road and heaps of manure and offal off South Bar.(1) The town was surrounded by fields enclosed in the eighteenth century or earlier. The only open spaces available for recreation were the cricket ground on the Oxford Road, and the meadows on the Northamptonshire side of the Cherwell where race meetings took place.

The main expansion of middle class housing in Banbury in the early nineteenth century was in the South Bar area. In about 1839 Crouch Street was laid out on the western side of South Bar, running from the frontage to the back lane at the rear of the plots. One of the first buildings on the new road was the British School, designed by J. M. Derrick who may also have been responsible for villas in the Gothic style in Crouch Street.(2) Terraces in the classical style were built in South Bar itself. In the late 1830s there was a boom in the building trade. Bricklayers struck for an extra 6d. a day in May 1840 when a newspaper reported that 'a considerable quantity of buildings have recently been or are now in progress'.(3) The working-class cottages in Constitution Row were built about 1840 by Joseph Garrett who had brickyards in the vicinity.(4) In the town centre, J. A. Gillett the banker built 21 working-class cottages in Back Lane, Broad Street and Pepper Alley in

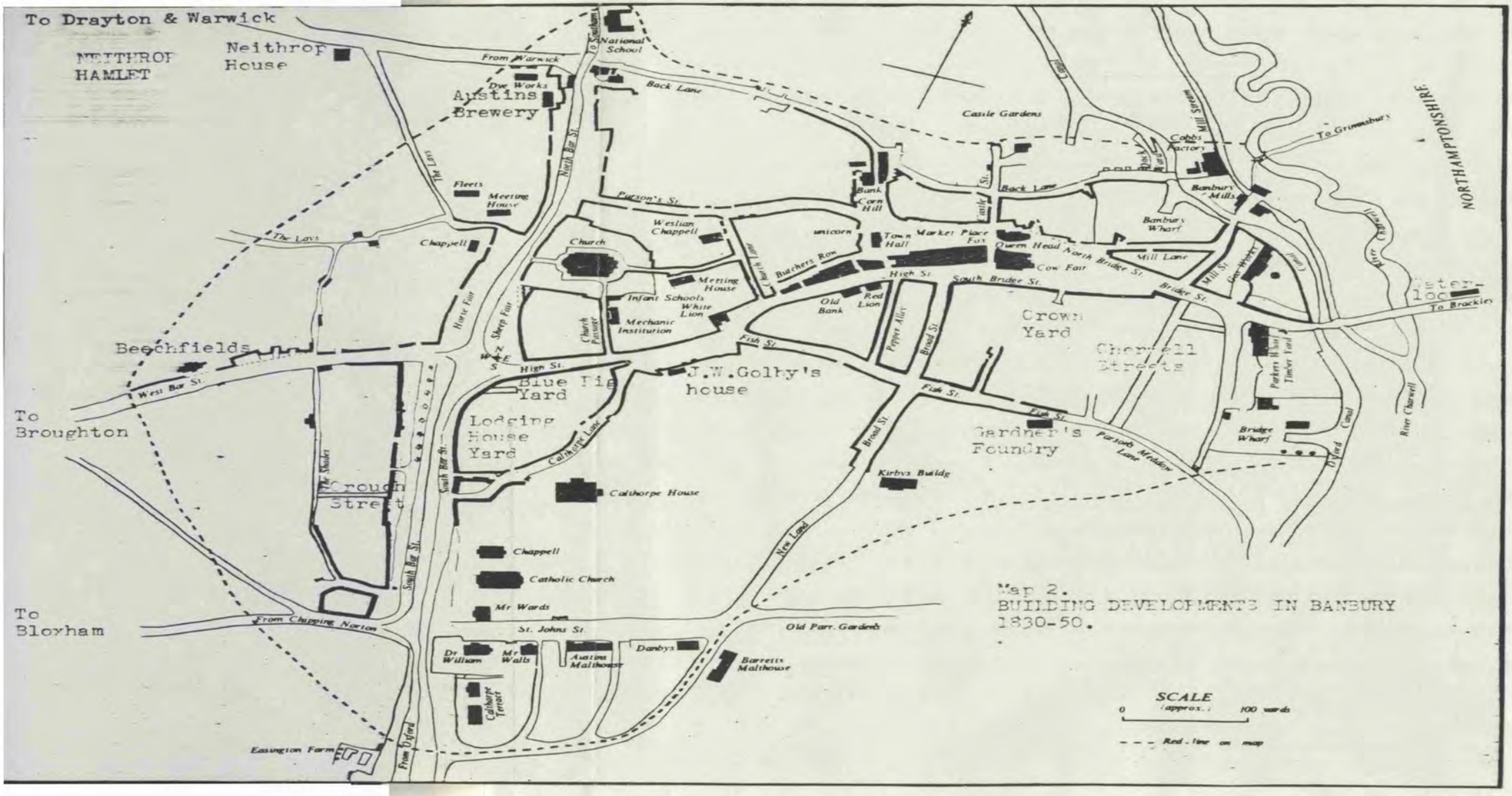
(1) G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.46,50,54-55,59,66,76; VCH, Oxon X, pp.69-70; 'A Map of Banbury, 1838', C & CH, II, 9, 1964,pp.143-46.

(2) VCH, Oxon X, pp.36-37.

(3) OC & CC, 23 May 1840.

(4) G. Herbert, op.cit., p.45; VCH, Oxon X, p.37.

To face p.29.



Map Two.
BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS IN BANBURY 1830-50.

The principal new residential thoroughfares laid out in this period were Crouch Street and the Cherwell Streets. The most important new industrial buildings were Gardner's foundry and the malthouses in St.John's Street.

the 1830s.(1) There was also ribbon development along the Southam and Warwick Roads.(2) In Neithrop, two classical villas, Cedar Villa and Neithrop Villa were built in the immediate vicinity of some particularly foul cottages. There were several in-filled folds in the hamlet, small fields or stackyards which had been randomly filled with ironstone cottages. One was euphemistically called John Pain's Square. Richard Gould, a surveyor, converted the one-time Neithrop parish workhouse into cottages called Gould's Row. North of the Warwick Road the Neithrop pound had been filled with cottages called Pound Yard.(3) If Banbury was a town of small landowners, it was also a town of small speculators. Many of its cottages were built in short terraces and courts which took their names from the local traders who built them. A list of properties made in 1850 includes Golby's Yard, Miss Wyatt's Cottages, Hobley's Lane, Armitt's Cottages and Gunn's Row.(4)

The largest development of working-class houses before 1850 was on the meadows south of Bridge Street, where, by 1843-44 Upper and Lower Cherwell Streets ran south to Fish Street. The Neithrop Jury list for August 1843 named three residents in the two streets, and by 1848 the directory included 32 traders in the area. By 1847 two terraces in the vicinity, Spring Cottages and Victoria Terrace were occupied. By 1851

(1) Audrey Taylor, Gilletts: Bankers at Banbury and Oxford, 1964, p.97.

(2) Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966, pp.87,89-90, 100-03.

(3) Bod.Lib.MS.D.D.Par.Banbury a.5(R),List of streets in Banbury and Neithrop providing a key to William Wilson's Visiting Plans,1850

(4) ORO BL/IV/i/2,deed No.B98,1844; BrL,RC p.104; PRO,HO 107,1851 Census enumerators' returns; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories

the development had extended south of Fish Street and comprised nearly 300 households.(1) The houses were constructed by several speculators. Robert Gillett, one-time landlord of the Crown Inn, a milkman, farmer and grazier, built for himself a six-bedroom house and dairy in Upper Cherwell Street about 1843-44, and subsequently erected four brick cottages on adjacent land. William Hobley, a builder, constructed other cottages in the area.(2) James Gardner's small foundry was situated on the perimeter of the development, but only 7.45 per cent of the employed population in the area in 1851 worked in engineering. The houses in the Cherwell streets were both cheap and profitable. The poorest type cost only £35 to build, inclusive of land costs, and yielded £6.10s.0d. per annum in rent. The better type cost £70, and brought in between £8 and £10 a year. It was reckoned that the whole cost could be recovered within twelve years.(3)

There were few houses of architectural distinction in Banbury. A fire in 1628 and long spells of fighting in the Civil War had destroyed almost every medieval building, although several sixteenth century timber-framed buildings survived, among them the Red Lion, the Reindeer and the Original Cake Shop. Otherwise most of the oldest buildings were built within a few years of 1650, usually of stone, although some had elaborate

(1) BG, 15 May 1847.

(2) PRO, HO 107, 1851 Census enumerators' returns.

(3) T. W. Rammell, op.cit., p.26.

frontages in timber.(1) George Herbert remarked that only two houses in the town were alike, that most of the buildings in the centre had low walls of crumbling ironstone and roofs of thatch or Stonesfield slate, and that the town was built 'in a straggling and irregular manner' with no notice taken of bow windows or flights of steps. Alfred Beesley, born in 1800, remembered when the streets were rain-sodden hollow ways, with stepping stones to cross them, ridden with dung heaps, ash heaps and standing pools of water.(2) Water was one of the dominant elements in the townscape. The inhabitants of Calthorpe Lane petitioned for a culvert to relieve flooding in 1835, and in 1846 blamed deaths in the street on 'the stench arising from the stagnant water and filth accumulating in the drains'. Sections of two streams which flowed eastwards across the town to the Cherwell ran in part in the open, and served as sewers. Pure drinking water was scarce; there were several free pumps but it was still profitable to sell soft water obtained from pumps off Church Lane.(3)

The transformation of the appearance of Banbury began in 1825 when a Paving and Lighting Commission was established by Act of Parliament.(4) The Commission first met in June 1825 when John Davis of Adderbury was appointed engineer and commissioned to make a map. Land between Bridge Street and the canal was acquired for a stone yard and served the Commissioners and their successors until 1974. Money was raised by loans,

(1) VCH, Oxon X, pp.29-33.

(2) G. Herbert, op.cit.,pp.58,68,86,94; A Beesley,op.cit.,p.353.

(3) G. Herbert, op.cit.,pp.42-43,59,61,90-91,97,106-07; ORO 315, Box 71, Bundle E.

(4) ORO, BB/II/i/2, BHLC Mins.; 6 Geo.IV, cap.130.

among the mortgagees being the historian, Alfred Beesley. The Commissioners' efforts met with considerable opposition. One of their first objects was to improve the impression of Banbury gained by travellers on the main Oxford-Coventry road. The act granted them authority to plant trees 'in the wide parts of the streets and other public places' and the setting out of saplings in South Bar was authorised at one of the first meetings. Some were pulled up and when the Commissioners persisted there was a riot led by a baker in which most of the trees were burned on a bonfire. The resentment of the rioters was shared by wealthier citizens, among them Richard Austin the brewer who told the Commission:

> 'We think it impossible that a market town dedicated to the purposes of trade can be a fit place to blend the larger ornaments of nature with those of commercial utility, either the body or the head must be in disproportion'.(1)

The process of rationalising the town was carried further after the election of the new municipal corporation in 1835-36 when the streets were extensively re-named.(2)

The Commission transformed the appearance of the borough. When new houses were erected, it insisted that no bow windows or projections of other kinds would be permitted, and that plated doors should be placed above coal cellars. Householders who allowed privies to become full were reprimanded. In 1840 a

(1) B. K. Lucas, 'Banbury: Trees or Trade', C & CH, VII, 3, 1979, pp.270-72; G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.54, 63,73-74,86; ORO, BB/II/i/2, B&LC Mins.

(2) ORO, BB/III/i/2, B&LC Mins.; for the political context of these changes see below p.123-25.

engineer from Birmingham informed the Commission that the Gornal stone curbing they had obtained in the 1820s was useless. The deficiencies in the pavements were set right during the 1840s, when the mean annual expenditure was £564 p.a. A sanitary inspector was appointed, who, when he presented his third report in 1848, was able to claim that the remaining public health problems in the borough were marginal. Three yards remained filthy, there were dung heaps by the British School , and in Calthorpe Lane, an offensive bone store at the Queen's Head, and three undrained houses in Cherwell. Even the yards where the poorest lived were being cleaned by the Commission's scavengers. The Commissioners had, as Alfred Beesley remarked, 'removed all the characteristic traces of the once "dirty Banbury"'.(1)

The Commission had powers to employ watchmen which passed to the Borough Corporation with the passage of the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835. The corporation's Watch Committee first met on 11 January 1836 and decided to establish its own police force. William Thompson, a chairmaker, was appointed part-time Superintendent, two full-time constables were engaged, and six watchmen, formerly employed by the Commission were retained. A police station was established in the lobby of the Theatre in Church Lane. The constables had a salary of £1 per week, and were provided with batons and an uniform 'of the same description as the London Police'. The police were instructed to visit lodging houses to ensure that vagrants were not harboured, and were prohibited from entering public houses except in the course of duty. Drunkenness on duty was neverthe-

(1) ORO, BB/III/i/2, BHLC Mins., ORO, BB/XX/i/1, Sanitary Inspector's Report; A Beesley, op.cit., p.553.

less the occasion of numerous reprimands and three dismissals in the ensuing decade. In 1840 the night watch was abolished, and two additional constables appointed. The effectiveness of the force was limited by the borough boundary which malefactors could cross to escape arrest. There were no police in Neithrop until 1857. The police were the object of derision from the Corporation's political opponents, but it was due to them that there was a noticeable difference between the standards of public order in the borough and in Neithrop.(1)

The Commission agreed to illuminate the town with gas in 1825, but subsequently oil lamps were erected. The Banbury Gas Light and Coke Company was formed in 1833, began to supply private houses in March 1834, and lit its first street lamp on 29 August 1834. A gasworks was erected by the canal, adjacent to the stone yard in Bridge Street.(2)

In Banbury, as in the nation at large, the threat of disease was one of the principal stimuli of sanitary reform. In 1831 there was an outbreak of a severe disorder nicknamed 'Banbury Fever'. In 1832 and 1833 there were typhus epidemics, the latter originating in a dung heap in Monument Street. In 1845 there was a serious epidemic of smallpox. By the late 1840s one sixth of all deaths in the town arose from epidemic,

(1) ORO, BB/V/ii/1, Minutes of Banbury Watch Committee 1836-66; Bod.Lib., Oxon 8° 637 (18), Instructions for the Police Force of the Borough of Banbury, 1836; NH, 25 Nov.1837.
(2) G. Herbert, op.cit., p.105; G. C. J. Hartland, 'Gas-Making in Banbury', C & CH, IV, 4, 1969, pp.47-53; OH, 9 Nov.1833; OH, 22 Mar.1834.

endemic and contagious diseases.(1) The threat of disease sharpened class differences. In November 1831 the Mayor and Magistrates warned inhabitants 'particularly the lower classes' to take precautions against cholera.(2) Banbury's middle classes were certainly frightened by the squalor in which some of their neighbours lived, and their fears stimulated both sanitary reform and the building of suburban villas. There was considerable support for public health reform because the problems in Neithrop were so manifest, and because the Paving and Lighting Commission, with its limited powers, had brought about obvious improvements within the borough. The Banbury Guardian in 1848 called for stronger public health legislation because permissive laws had been ineffective.(3) After the Public Health Act of 1848 came into effect, 163 residents in Neithrop petitioned the Central Board of Health for an enquiry into the sanitary condition of the town. Since Neithrop had a death rate of 26 per 1,000 compared with 21.6 in Banbury, it could have been the subject of an enquiry even without a petition since the Central Board was empowered to order an investigation in any locality where the rate exceeded 23 per 1,000.(4)

The Inspector, T. W. Rammell, took evidence in Banbury

(1) T. W. Rammell, op.cit., pp.14-17; Bod.Lib., Banbury Parish Registers; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.32; T. W. Boss, Reminiscences of Old Banbury, 1903, p.9.

(2) BPL, RC p.9.

(3) BG, 17 Feb.1848.

(4) William Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942,p.26; R.A.Lewis, Edwin Chadwick and the Public Health Movement 1832-54, 1952, pp.170-71.

in the spring of 1849.(1) He found examples of defective sanitation in the borough which the Paving and Lighting Commission had been unable to eradicate. In Crown Yard there was one privy to 43 people and there was one for 47 in Mill Lane. There were dung heaps in Soft Water Yard and Catherine Wheel Yard. He concluded that privy accommodation presented 'perhaps as extreme cases of the kind as are to be found in the filthiest and most crowded towns in England'. Nevertheless he thought that the borough was tolerably well paved, cleansed and policed.(2) He was unable to reach the same conclusion about Neithrop.

'Neithrop', Rammell observed, was 'so situated and of such form that it almost entirely surrounds the Borough of Banbury and the boundary between them is extremely intricate and ill-defined'. He was told of the social differences between the two parts of the parish. Thomas Pain the solicitor said that the back streets of Neithrop were 'inhabited by the poor and persons of bad character'. Dr. R. S. Wise observed 'the poorer classes chiefly reside in Neithrop'. Neithrop was badly if at all paved. Refuse accumulated in its streets, and its high mortality rate was caused by the neglect of drainage and by polluted water supplies. Thomas Pain told Rammell of his frustration when there were men and women fighting and calling blue murder outside a beerhouse in Back Lane near his home, with whom the borough police were powerless to interfere.(3) Before 1835 the contrast between Banbury and Neithrop had

(1) BG, 31 May 1849.

(2) T. W. Rammell, op.cit., pp.17-18, 24-25,32.

(3) Ibid, pp.3,11-12,17-18,32.

extended to the administration of poor relief. The Banbury poor house was 'neat and clean in the extreme' and the paupers had meat every day if they wished, but 'a more wretched habitation was never beheld' than the Neithrop workhouse.(1)

The most disturbing evidence which Rammell discovered concerned the Cherwell streets, built within the previous six years on land which was obviously ill-drained. Dr. Rye said the area was subject to fever and had been the seat of a small-pox epidemic in 1845. Richard Brazier told him that a group of six houses shared one privy, and that the contents of cess pits were often left in the streets for several days.(2) The foul living conditions in Cherwell were not, like those in Blue Pig Yard or Calthorpe Street, the result of topographical constraints dating from the Middle Ages, of immemorial custom, or of a concentration of the most feckless classes. They had been created between 1843 and 1849 by respected citizens.

Rammell's report defined many urgent problems. Some were practical questions, which awaited the importation of expertise for their solution. Some were rendered insoluble for the time being by administrative immobility or the lack of political will. Meanwhile the political, religious and recreational activities of respectable Banbury took place on a well-lit stage, with dirt, disease, drunkenness, crime and prostitution flourishing in the wings. Banbury's problems were magnified by the division between the borough and Neithrop. The two portions of the parish, Rammell observed, 'form one town,

(1) PRO, MH 12/139, Edward Gulson - Poor Law Commissioners, 31 Jan.1835.

(2) T. W. Rammell, op.cit., pp.17, 26.

though not with unity of social interests'.(1) Still, in 1850, the nocturnal traveller approaching Banbury would see from a distance the lights of the borough, but before reaching them would have to stagger and stumble through the puddles, dung heaps and waggon ruts of the unpaved, unpoliced and unilluminated streets of Neithrop.

(1) Ibid, p.6.

Chapter Three.

The Local Economy before the Railways.

As I was going to Banbury
Upon a summer's day,
My dame had butter, eggs and fruit,
And I had corn and hay;
Joe drove the ox, and Tom the swine,
Lick took the foal and mare,
I sold them all - then home to dine
From famous Banbury Fair.(1)

The term 'Banburyshire', much used in the 1830s, was not just an affectation. Banbury's economy was in many respects comparable with that of most county towns. In 1831 44,000 people lived within eight miles of the town, and regarded Banbury as the main focus of their economic activities.(2) Countrymen from further afield sent orders to Banbury tradesmen through their weekly carriers, or annually visited its fairs. The nearest places of comparable size, the county towns of Oxford, Northampton and Warwick, and the resort of Leamington lay 20 or more miles away. None of the smaller market centres between 10 and 15 miles distant, Bicester, Brackley, Shipston-on-Stour and Chipping Norton, had facilities to match those in Banbury. Deddington, Hook Norton and Aynho, between five and seven miles away, had been regarded as markets in the seventeenth century, but could no longer claim to be towns. Like market towns in other regions, Banbury had grown between 1700

(1) I. and P. Opie, The Oxford Dictionary of English Nursery Rhymes, 1951, p.65.

(2) Alfred Beesley, The History of Banbury, 1841, p.559.

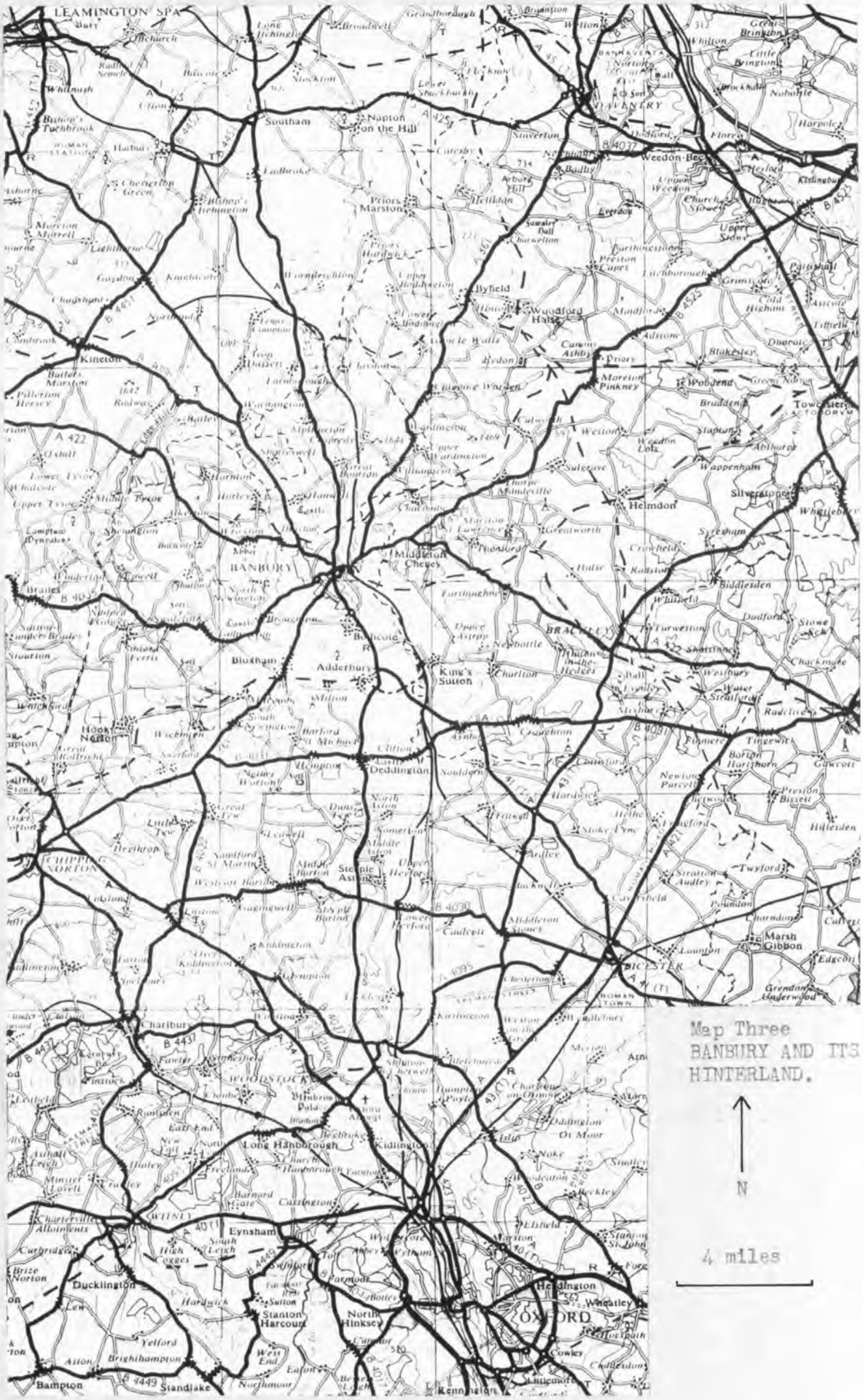
and 1830 at the expense of its smaller rivals.(1)

Banbury's hinterland was well defined by the editor of the Banbury Guardian in 1843 when it was on the verge of becoming a fully-fledged newspaper:

> 'The town of Banbury is situated at the northern extremity of the county of Oxford, twenty-two miles from the city of Oxford. It is so near to the county of Northampton that a portion of its outskirts are within the limits of that county; the town of Northampton being twenty eight miles distant. The county of Warwick, Warwick itself lying at a distance of twenty miles, comprises a considerable portion of what may be termed the Banbury district, and reaches within three miles of the borough of Banbury. Portions of Worcestershire and of Gloucestershire are also in much nearer neighbourhood and in much more intimate connection with the town of Banbury than with either of their respective county towns. The county of Buckingham is distant only nine miles, while the nearest place in it in which a newspaper is published is distant thirty four miles. Thus remotely situated from any place of central importance, in a fertile, wealthy and highly populous district; having the advantage of direct water communication with London, Birmingham and other commercial marts, it is of natural consequence that the town of Banbury has become distinguished as a market for almost every description of merchandise. To the 140 places

(1) Alan Everitt, 'The Marketing of Agricultural Product', in Joah Thirsk, ed., The Agricultural History of England and Wales, IV, 1967,pp.474-75; Alan Everitt, 'Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire: the Role of the Country Carrier', in Alan Everitt, ed., Perspectives in English Urban History, 1973,p.216.

To face p.41.


LEAMINGTON SPA
Napton on the Hill
Southam
Priors Marston
Weedon Bec
DAVENTRY
Woodford Halse
Kineton
Moreton Pinkney
Helmdon
Silverstone
Middleton Cheney
BANBURY
Biddlesden
Adderbury
King's Sutton
Deddington
Hook Norton
CHIPPING NORTON
Marsh Gibbon
BICESTER
Charlbury
WOODSTOCK
Long Hanborough
Kidlington
Eynsham
Ducklington
Stanton Harcourt
North Hinksey
Headington
Wheatley
OXFORD
Cowley
Bampton
Standlake
Yelford
Brighthampton
Aston
Tackley
Steeple Aston
Middle Aston
Somerton
Fritwell
Souldern
Hardwick
Twyford
Finmere
Tingewick
Water Stratford
Radclive
Chackmore
Stowe
Dadford
Shalstone
Turweston
Whitfield
Radstone
Sulgrave
Thenford
Greatworth
Charlton
Evenley
Hillesden
Preston Bissett
Boycott
Akeley
Stuchbury
Maidford
Farthinghoe
Chipping Warden
Aynho
Croughton
Clifton
Hardwick
Newton Purcell
Stoke Lyne
Fringford
Caversfield
Bucknell
Middleton Stoney
Weston on the Green
Ardley
Fewcott
Duns Tew
Lower Heyford
Upper Heyford
Rousham
Lower Arncott
Upper Arncott
Piddington
Blackthorn
Ambrosden
Merton
Arncott
Wretchwick
Chesterton
Bicester
Launton
Grendon Underwood
Edgcott
Twyford
Poundon
Stratton Audley
Churchill
Kirtlington
Enstone
Heythrop
Little Tew
Great Tew
Sandford St Martin
Westcott Barton
Steeple Barton
Middle Barton
Upper Heyford
Lower Heyford
Caulcott

within a circuit of ten miles it may be said to be a metropolis'.(1)

The Poor Law Commissioners in 1835 found Banbury the only place in the region which could be considered as the centre of a poor law union.(2) Several outlying parishes were added after the original designation of the union, which eventually consisted of 51 townships, including Banbury, Neithrop and Grimsbury. Seven other townships were named in poor law records with their mother parishes or adjacent, larger townships. Four of the 46 rural townships, Adderbury, Middleton Cheney, Bloxham and Hook Norton had populations of over a thousand in 1831. Seven had between 500 and 1,000, 27 between 200 and 500, six between 50 and 200, and two, the shrunken villages of Prescote and Clattercote, less than 20. Most of the Union was in Oxfordshire, but it included six warwickshire parishes to the north west of Banbury, and eight in Northamptonshire to the east and north east. To the south east the large Northamptonshire parish of King's Sutton, only four miles from Banbury, was placed in the Brackley union, as were the closed villages of Aynho, Farthinghoe and Thenford only a little further away. The Union did not include all of Banbury's hinterland, but as an easily definable unit, it is a useful means of measuring statistically the changes which were taking place in the countryside.

The extent of Banbury's economic influence is shown by the routes of the carriers' carts which travelled to the town. Carriers went to Banbury from every settlement of significance within ten miles, and there were weekly services from many

(1) BG, 6 July, 1843.

(2) PRO, MH 12/9577, Edward Gulson - Poor Law Commission, 9 March, 1835.

villages between ten and fifteen miles away, like Enstone, Fringford, Charwelton and Harbury. Some places even further away also had services, most of them small market towns like Buckingham, Bicester and Daventry. Within ten miles the influence of Banbury was not rivalled by that of any other market town; in villages between ten and fifteen miles away Banbury competed with larger towns like Northampton and Oxford, and its influence was felt in places as far as twenty miles distant.(1)

The origins of immigrants living in Banbury also show the extent of the town's influence. In 1851 there were 1,317 migrants born in the parishes in the Poor Law Union living in the town, some 15 per cent of the population. By expressing the total from each parish as a percentage of the population of the parish in 1851, an index figure can be obtained which enables crude comparisons to be drawn between the parishes. The average figure for the Union was 6.27, but as Table Four shows, there were many more migrants from the villages nearest Banbury than from those at a greater distance. Most of the parishes on the edge of the Union had index figures between three and four. Only from parishes more than ten miles away were the numbers of migrants insignificant.

Banbury stands in the centre of one of the most fertile farming regions in Europe. The strong, deep, red, ironstone soils have been praised by agricultural commentators from the time of Camden to the present day.(2) Arthur Young concluded:

(1) For details of carriers' routes see Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(2) Mary Marshall, The Land of Britain: The Report of the Land Utilisation Survey of Britain, pt.56, Oxfordshire, 1943, pp.199, 203-05.

> 'a finer district of soil is not often to be met with whether in grass or arable. This red district, in respect of soil, may be considered as the glory of the county. It is deep, sound, friable, yet capable of tenacity; and adapted to every plant that can be trusted to it ...' (1)

The region dependent on Banbury extended beyond the redlands to the Stonebrash and other less fertile soils, but the rich red soils created the essential character of the hinterland. By 1830 the process of enclosure in the region was all but complete. On the drier uplands wheat and barley were grown, while roots and green crops were cultivated for dairy and beef cattle, sheep and pigs. Only on the flood-prone meadows of the Cherwell was there any concentration on livestock.(2) The Banbury region could present a prospect of plenty and peace. Alfred Beesley wrote in 1841:

> 'A more thoroughly English landscape, or a spot more rich in arable or pasture land, thickly overspread with trees, watered by many streams and ornamented at short intervals with villages, spires and towers, can perhaps hardly be found elsewhere'.(3)

The social climate of Banbury's hinterland in the 1830s and 1840s was less idyllic. In 1830 the average wage of a labourer was only 9s. a week, while single men in winter sometimes earned as little as 3s. In 1838 farm workers' wages were

(1) Arthur Young, A General View of the Agriculture of Oxfordshire, 1813, pp.4-5.

(2) A. Young, op.cit.,pp.39,86,106,180-81,269,211-12; Clare Sewell Read, 'On the Agriculture of Oxfordshire',JRASE, XV, 1854, pp.189,248.

(3) A. Beesley, op.cit., p.552.

between 9s. and 10s. a week, lower than they had been 30 years earlier.(1) As Cobbett observed in the Isle of Thanet, there was nowhere less hospitable to the poor than the best arable districts, where land was so valuable that none was left as common.(2) A major cause of rural poverty was the decline of the local textile industries. Plush-making declined in most Banburyshire villages between 1830 and 1850. There were 27 plush weavers at Middleton Cheney in 1841, but only five in 1851. The number at Adderbury declined from 44 to 11 in the same period.(3) At Middleton Cheney and Chacombe there were respectively 24 and 25 stocking frames in 1844, but the industry was utterly depressed. In 1835 Middleton Cheney presented 'a complete picture of a decayed manufacturing district' and in 1839 eleven families from the village were on poor relief in Leicester.(4) Pillow lace was still made at Moreton Pinkney in the 1830s, but the lacemakers were poorly paid. At Juniper Hill in the 1870s the days when lace was a regular source of income, and the products were taken annually to Banbury Fair,

(1) Political Register, 11 Dec. 1830; Report of the Assistant Commissioner on Hand-Loom Weavers, BPP, 1840, XXIV, pp.333-36.
(2) William Cobbett, Rural Rides, 1957 edn., I, p.248.
(3) R. P. Beckinsale, 'The Plush Industry of North Oxfordshire', Oxoniensia, XXVIII, 1963, p.58; Audrey Taylor, Gilletts: Bankers at Banbury and Oxford, 1964, pp.84-94.
(4) William Felkins, The History of the Machine-Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacturers, 1967 edn., p.467; A. Beesley, op.cit., p.570; A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.84, 87; George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949, p.123; PRO, MH 12/139, Edward Gulson - Poor Law Commission, 5 March 1835.

were a distant memory.(1) There was no regular work for women in the countryside outside the harvest period, and a wife who sought to supplement her husband's earning was likely to be drawn to Banbury, where she could work as a seamstress, laundress or charwoman.

Under-employment in the Banbury district in the early nineteenth century was reflected in heavy expenditure on poor relief. In most parishes a peak of expenditure had been passed by 1830, and spending was declining in the years before the Poor Law Amendment Act, probably as the result of more efficient, less humane administration rather than diminishing needs. The Speenhamland system was widely used, and in Adderbury, Hanwell, Hornton, Shennington, Tadmarton, Cropredy and Claydon the roundsman system was employed.(2) Social discontent was openly manifest in the 'Swing' riots of 1830. The rioting in Banbury on 29 November 1830 may have arisen from social and political tensions within the town, but in the countryside the causes of disorder were agrarian, arising from the threats to employment posed by the introduction of machinery. On 30 November a

(1) Thomas Mozley, Reminiscences: chiefly of Towns, Villages and Schools, 1885, II, pp.223-24; Flora Thompson, Lark Rise to Candleford, 1957 edn., pp.78-79; George Herbert, op.cit.,pp.122-23.
(2) For Poor Law Administration in the district see VCH, Oxon IX, pp.23-24,47,65,92,107,116-17,128-29,143,153,163, 179; VCH, Oxon X, pp.168,191,203,246-48; for the roundsman system see G. Herbert, op.cit., p.48; J. D. Marshall, The Old Poor Law 1754-1834, 1968, pp.13-14.

mowing maching was destroyed at King's Sutton and a threshing machine at Bodicote. The next day two machines were burned at Tadmarton, and on 3 December a threshing machine was set alight at Upper Boddington.(1) The social stresses of the Banbury-shire countryside gained some national attention in 1830, but only the riotous nature of the machine burning was unusual. In 1835 the district was said to be very distressed and highly pauperised.(2) Incendiarism was very common. Poaching was prevalent, both as a means of succour and as a form of social protest. In the winter of 1846-47 sheep stealing was endemic in Deddington, Middleton Cheney and Adderbury. In 1845 a black-faced gang of burglars from Culworth were captured, after committing a series of robberies well into Warwickshire.(3)

Joseph Ashby observed that villages had 'their own special ways and dispositions, as men do'. He contrasted the extro-vert conversation of the men of the open village of Tysoe with the guarded suspicion of the estate villagers of Upton, and the silence of the work-absorbed quarrymen of Ratley.(4) Similar contrasts could be discovered in the 1830s. In May 1833 after a new overseer reduced poor law expenditure in Middleton Cheney, the state of the village was reported as

(1) E. J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, Captain Swing, 1973 edn., pp.112-13,118,136,185-86,303-04,311-12; P. R. L. Horn, 'Banbury and the Riots of 1830', C & CH, III, 9, 1967, pp.176-79; JOJ, 11 Dec.1830.

(2) PRO, MH 12/9577, Edward Gulson - Poor Law Commission, 9 Mar.1835.

(3) NH, 18 April 1845; NH, 28 Nov.1846; NH, 5 Dec.1846; NH, 26 Dec.1846.

(4) M. K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1961,pp.56,150-51.

alarming. Seven sheep were stabbed and left 'in a horrid condition', ricks and farm buildings were destroyed by incendiary fires, and anonymous letters were circulating. In 1835 the parish was 'in a very unsettled state'. In 1832 a group of thieves from Charlton was caught after plundering many barns in the district.(1) Moreton Pinkney, nine miles from Banbury was a particularly lawless open village. The young Tractarian Thomas Mozley found it a place of numerous freeholders, many public houses and two much-encroached-upon commons, a 'village of misery and dirt, of pigs and paupers'. A neighbouring landowner complained in 1849 that 'the Moreton dictionary does not include such words as morality, honesty, truth, gratitude etc.... at least half the grown-up population are ... for any crime from lying to murder'.(2) Other heavily pauperised open villages to the east of Banbury were King's Sutton, Marston St. Lawrence, Culworth and Sulgrave.(3) Some seven miles south of Banbury was a ring of peaceful, sparsely populated closed villages, Worton, Clympton, Rousham and Sandford St. Martin. In Northamptonshire the Drydens had long before the 1830s cleared the cottages of Canons Ashby, while the labouring poor of Edgecote had been despatched to the adjacent parish of Chipping Warden. At Thenford Hall, home of the Severne family, beef was distributed to the poor every Christmas, and dinners, at which traditional English songs were sung, were held for farmers and cottagers.(4)

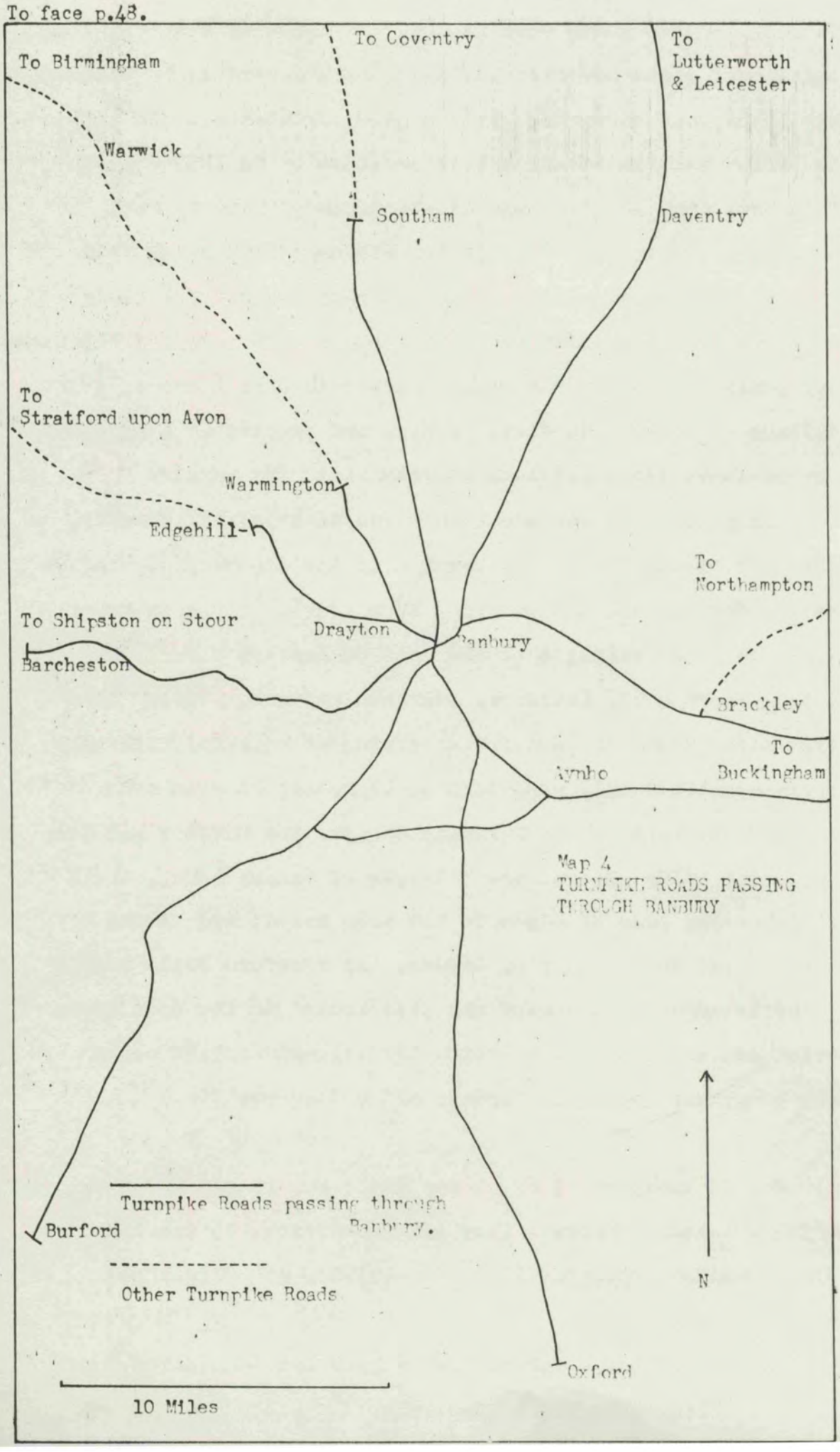
(1) NH, 28 April 1832; NH, 4 May 1833; NH, 11 May 1833; PRO, MH 12/9577, Weston & Moore - Poor Law Commission, 19 Jan.1835.

(2) T. Mozley, op.cit., II,pp.200-13,223. NH, 5Aug.1844; NH,27 Jan.1849.

(3) PRO,MH 12/8671, Richard Earl - Poor Law Commission,5 May 1835.

(4) NH, 7 Jan.1832; NH, 11 Jan.1834.

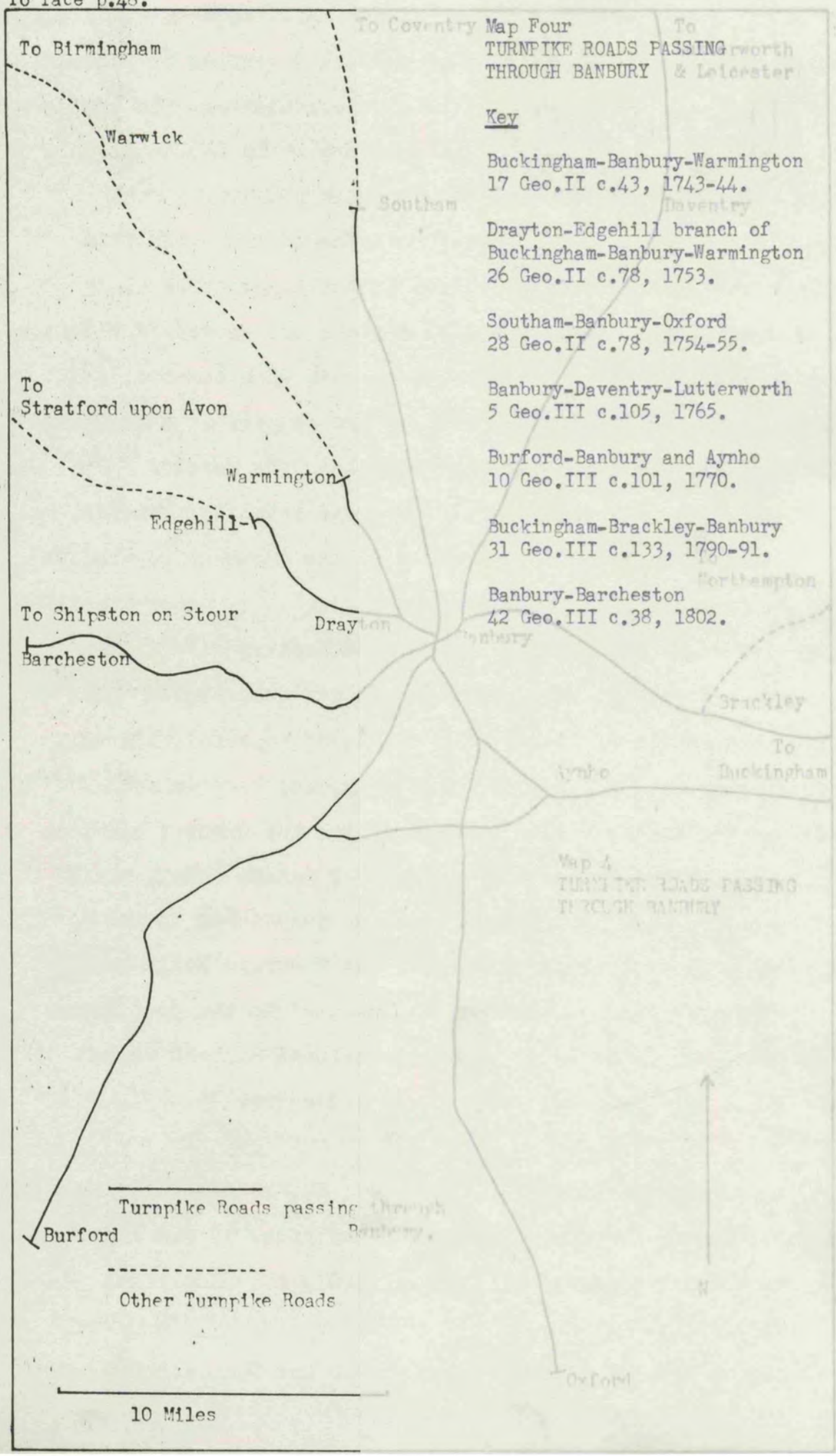
To face p.43.


To Coventry
To Birmingham
To Lutterworth & Leicester
Warwick
Southam
Daventry
To Stratford upon Avon
Warmington
Edgehill
To Northampton
To Shipston on Stour
Drayton
Banbury
Barcheston
Brackley
To Buckingham
Aynho
Map 4
TURNPIKE ROADS PASSING THROUGH BANBURY
Turnpike Roads passing through Banbury.
Burford
Other Turnpike Roads
N
Oxford
10 Miles

To face p.48.

To face p.48.

Map Four
TURNPIKE ROADS PASSING
THROUGH BANBURY



Key

Buckingham-Banbury-Warmington
17 Geo.II c.43, 1743-44.

Drayton-Edgehill branch of
Buckingham-Banbury-Warmington
26 Geo.II c.78, 1753.

Southam-Banbury-Oxford
28 Geo.II c.78, 1754-55.

Banbury-Daventry-Lutterworth
5 Geo.III c.105, 1765.

Burford-Banbury and Aynho
10 Geo.III c.101, 1770.

Buckingham-Brackley-Banbury
31 Geo.III c.133, 1790-91.

Banbury-Barcheston
42 Geo.III c.38, 1802.

Francis Litchfield, rector of Farthinghoe from 1817 to 1876, Conservative, racegoer, antagonist of Thomas Arnold, made his once unruly parish into 'the best-ordered village in the neighbourhood'. He attributed his success to his village clothing society. Deposits were collected weekly after divine services, so that members were compelled to attend church. Members who were convicted, or who became pregnant while unmarried were expelled. Through the influence of the society the number of communicants was raised from an average of 15, to a total of 110 at Christmas 1837. Litchfield introduced allotments for labourers and insisted upon the whitewashing of cottages. He was praised in 1838 for changing the squalid poverty and wretchedness of Farthinghoe into content, joy and gladness.(1)

Seven turnpike roads passed through or terminated at Banbury, and most of their clerks were Banbury solicitors.(2) The turnpikes included all the present main roads out of the town except the route to Northampton through Thorpe Mandeville, the ancient Banbury Lane, which was still a drovers' route in the early nineteenth century, and was never subjected to tolls. Road traffic is difficult to measure, but a census taken in March 1845 of the traffic crossing Banbury Bridge, revealed that over a five day period there were 1,008 pedestrians per day, 132 horses being ridden, 55 carts or waggons and 36 private carriages. Some 372 beasts were driven over the bridge in the five days, a total which would have been much greater

(1) T. Mozley, op.cit., II, pp.281-82; NH, 5 Jan.1833; NH, 12 Jan.1833; NH, 13 Jan.1838; BG, 14 Sep.1876; OH, 18 Aug. 1838; PRO, MH 12/8671, Richard Earl - Poor Law Commission, 5 May 1835.

(2) See Map Four

in the droving season when as many as 2,000 cattle a day from Wales and Herefordshire crossed the Cherwell.(1) A survey taken in 1845 found on the basis of observations over a 14 day period that the busiest road out of Banbury was that to Southam, with an estimated 4,966 tons of freight passing per year, followed by that to Oxford with 4,108, that to Bicester with 2,886 and that to Stratford with 2,626. The density of passenger traffic was in the same order. 2,704 tons of general merchandise a year went to London by road, compared with about 4,000 tons by water.(2)

In 1834 Banbury had two waggon and one cart service to London each week, doing the journey in about 40 hours, and two weekly waggon services to Birmingham which travelled overnight. By 1836 there were three van and two waggon services to London each week. The ponderous London waggons, 18 ft. long, 7 ft. 6 in. wide and 12 ft. high were each drawn by eight horses. A punt was suspended from the bottom of the vehicle between the wheels, in which live lambs, pigs and poultry could be carried. Heavy goods were placed in the centre, and butter, and carcasses of sheep and pigs piled on top, the load being closed up with heavy mohair curtains.(3) Banbury was on two long distance cart circuits, providing weekly links with Worcester, Gloucester, Stratford, Coventry and Leicester. There were three weekly

(1) BG,17 April,1845; T.W.Boss, Reminiscences of Old Banbury 1903, p.8.

(2) Report of Commissioners, Railway Gauges, Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton and Oxford and Rugby Railway Bills, BPP, 1845, XI, pp.208-09.

(3) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; T. W. Boss, op.cit.,p.4

cart services to Northampton, and the country carriers offered connections to other towns. Evesham could be reached via Shipston-on-Stour or Brailes, Cheltenham via Lower Swell or Stowe-on-the-Wold, and Bedford via Buckingham.(1)

Stage coach services through Banbury improved rapidly in the early 1830s. In 1830 there were 16 journeys a week to London, 13 to Birmingham, six to Leicester and Oxford, and three to Northampton and Kidderminster. Most were worked from the Flying Horse, which was kept by John Drinkwater, a partner in the Birmingham-Oxford Regulator. By 1836 most of the coach services had moved with Drinkwater to the White Lion. In that year there were 22 services a week to London, 19 to Birmingham and 12 to Oxford. The fastest coach reached London in seven and a half hours.(2)

The most important road vehicles serving Banbury were neither the lumbering waggons nor the speedy stage coaches, but the humble carriers' carts which brought in country people and their produce, and distributed merchandise from the town to the agricultural districts. 'Some idea may be formed of its commerce' wrote one observer of Banbury market in 1854, 'by the fact of nearly 300 carriers attending it, many of whom visit it on two other days in the week'. In 1831, 167 carriers made 367 journeys per week into the town. By 1841, 192 carriers made 437 journeys.(3) Banbury well deserved the appellation

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(2) John Drinkwater, Inheritance, being the first book of an Autobiography, 1931, pp.99-116; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(3) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, Martin Billing, Directory and Gazetteer of the Counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, 1854, p.129.

'the metropolis of the carriers' carts'. It bears comparison with much larger Midland county towns like Northampton which had 290 services in 1849, and Derby which had 465 in 1846.(1) In 1847 the carriers were described as 'those who earn a hard livelihood by their two or three days a week attendance at Banbury and upon whose care the traders are, most of them, dependent for the regular transaction of a good portion of their business'.(2)

The most popular day for carriers' visits to Banbury was Thursday, the principal market day, on which about 190 carriers entered the town. In 1835 business on Thursday was said to be very brisk, and the rest of the week a time of comparative leisure.(3) Most services on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays were provided by carriers from nearby villages who operated daily. About a quarter of the weekly calls were made on Mondays and the popularity of Saturday, with about 15 per cent of the calls, grew steadily.(4) The carrying trade was concentrated at certain public houses. Most popular in 1831 were the Plough and the Waggon and Horses, each of which

(1) Samuel Bagshaw, History, Directory and Gazetteer of Derbyshire, 1846; H. Whellan, History, Gazetteer and Directory of Northamptonshire, 1849; A. Everitt, 'Town and Country in Victorian Leicestershire', pp.222-25,232; see also Table One.

(2) BG, 8 July 1847.

(3) PRO, MH 12/9577, Daniel Stuart - Poor Law Commission, 29 Dec.1835.

(4) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

received 40 calls per week. Twenty six public houses were involved in the trade in 1831, and 24 in 1851. The Bear, which had 11 services in 1831 and 31 in 1851, and the Old George whose total of nine rose to 31, had both substantially increased their trade, while the Talbot, a major carrying inn in 1831, did not cater for the trade twenty years later.(1)

The year 1836 marked the zenith of stage coach and waggon services from Banbury. In October 1837 the London and Birmingham Railway was opened to Tring. Some London coaches then ran to Aylesbury to connect with an omnibus which met the trains at Tring. Early in 1838 Banburians were concerned that the LBR would be detrimental to the town, and the building of a new turnpike road to Weedon, or a horse tramway to Blisworth were considered.(2) It was feared that such projects would be rendered redundant by the North and South Junction Railway projected to run from Basingstoke to Stonebridge near Coventry.(3) In 1838 the turnpike trust improved the road between Middleton Cheney and Brackley on the route from Banbury to several stations on the LBR.(4)

After 1838 road services underwent a series of kaleidoscopic changes, responding feverishly to the opening of railways, which continued until Banbury's own lines were opened in 1850. On Monday 9 April 1838 the London and Birmingham was opened to

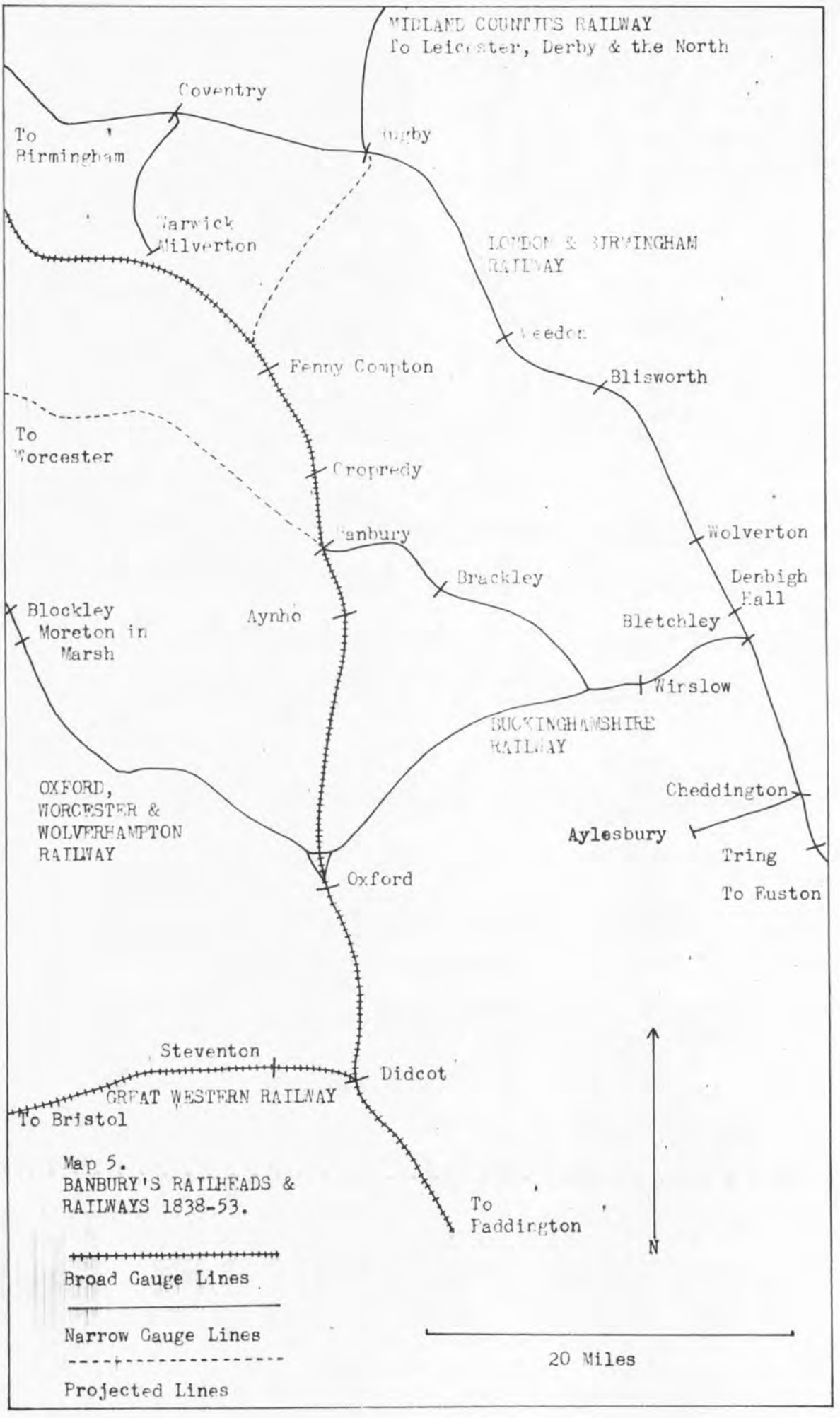
(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(2) OC & CC, 14 Oct.1837; OC & CC, 20 Jan.1838; OC & CC, 21 April 1838; NH, 6 Jan.1838; NH, 21 Jan.1838; NH, 24 Mar.1838; JOJ, 20 Jan.1838; JOJ, 16 June 1838; BG, 28 Mar.1844.

(3) ORO, PD 2/8; BPL, RO p.3.

(4) OH, 14 April 1838.

To face p.53.


MIDLAND COUNTIES RAILWAY
To Leicester, Derby & the North
Coventry
To Birmingham
Rugby
Warwick
Milverton
LONDON & BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY
Weedon
Fenny Compton
Blisworth
To Worcester
Cropredy
Banbury
Wolverton
Brackley
Denbigh Hall
Blockley
Moreton in Marsh
Aynho
Bletchley
Wirslow
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE RAILWAY
OXFORD, WORCESTER & WOLVERHAMPTON RAILWAY
Cheddington
Aylesbury
Tring
To Euston
Oxford
Steventon
Didcot
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY
To Bristol
To Paddington
N
Map 5.
BANBURY'S RAILHEADS & RAILWAYS 1838-53.
Broad Gauge Lines
Narrow Gauge Lines
Projected Lines
20 Miles

Denbigh Hall, north of Bletchley and about 31 miles from Banbury. A coach called The Railway began to run from the Red Lion to Denbigh Hall, bringing the time for a journey to London down to six hours. In May 1838 freight services commenced between London and Banbury through Denbigh Hall. Later in the year the LBR was opened throughout, and Wolverton station became the railhead for Banbury. In October 1838 the Royal Mail coach service from London to Birmingham which had run through Banbury was transferred to the railway, and a feeder mail coach began to run to Wolverton.(1) In 1838 there were 13 departures a week for London via Wolverton, but 15 services a week still did the whole journey by road. On 10 June 1839 the branch from the LBR at Cheddington to Aylesbury was opened, and in April 1840 a new coach and rail service from Banbury in six and a quarter hours was inaugurated by this route. Another service to London connected with the trains at Weedon. During 1840 the Midland Counties Railway was opened from Derby to Rugby, and the Regulator service to Leicester was diverted to Rugby station, where it connected with trains to York. On 1 June 1840 the Great Western Railway was completed from Paddington to Steventon, ten miles from Oxford. An omnibus to Oxford connected with another omnibus to Steventon where passengers joined a train to Paddington. On 12 June 1840 the Great Western branch from Didcot to Oxford was opened and coaches from Banbury began to connect at Oxford station with trains to London. Also in 1844 a branch was opened from the

(1) NH, 14 April, 1838; JOJ, 14 April 1838; JOJ, 6 Oct.1838; JOJ, 27 Oct. 1838; OH, 19 May 1838; BPL, RC p.139.

LBR at Coventry to Milverton Station, Warwick, which then became the terminus for the Regulator coach from Oxford and Banbury which had previously run to Birmingham.(1) In 1845 one through coach service to London survived, but most passengers went by coach and rail, either through Oxford, or through Weedon, Wolverton or Aylesbury on the LBR. The best time by the LBR route was 5½ hours, while the GWR claimed to offer one service in 5 hr. 25 min. By 1848 the direct coaches to London and the cross-country routes had all been abandoned, and services from Banbury were entirely orientated on the railway stations at Milverton, Rugby, Weedon, Wolverton, Aylesbury and Oxford. Most stage waggon services used the railway, but some through waggons to London survived until 1850, and the Birmingham services always went through by road.(2)

The Oxford Canal from its junction with the Coventry Canal at Hawkesbury to Banbury was opened in 1778, and its extension to Oxford in 1790. Banbury became a canal town of repute, with three wharves, canalside limekilns and timber-yards, and a dock for building and repairing boats. In the 1830s Banbury had six or seven fly boat services a week in each direction, taking small consignments southwards to Oxford and London, and to destinations all over the north of England. During the 1840s some services were transferred to road and rail,

(1) NH, 1 June 1838; NH, 15 June 1838; NH, 18 April 1840; E. T. McDermott, The History of the Great Western Railway, 1964 edn., I, pp.53, 87; Rex Christiansen, A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, VII, The West Midlands, 1973,pp.267-68.

(2) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

but one company still operated a daily fly boat in each direction. Two market boats a week sailed to Oxford.(1) There was a heavy through traffic of bulk loads along the canal to the Thames. In 1842, 9,900 boats passed over Claydon summit north of Banbury. The main traffics were minerals southward-bound from the Midlands, and agricultural produce passing northwards. William Ward whose company traded at the Old Wharf, Banbury, said in 1841 that their trade was principally the carriage of coal, slate and salt from Staffordshire and Leicestershire, and of grain in the opposite direction. In 1845 about 30,000 tons of coal a year, brought by canal from South Staffordshire, were consumed in the Banbury area, and some 50,000 tons used around Oxford would have passed through Banbury. 3,000 tons a year of general merchandise left Banbury by canal for Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, and 10,000 tons of grain and hay was sent to Birmingham and the Black Country.(2)

On the night of 30 March 1851 seven canal boats were moored

(1) A. Beesley, op.cit., p.359; Charles Hadfield, The Canals of the East Midlands, 1966, pp.17,21,25,157; Hugh Compton, The Oxford Canal, 1976, passim; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(2) H. Compton, op.cit., pp.106-07; Lords Select Committee to inquire into the expediency of restricting the practice of carrying goods and merchandise on Canals, Navigable Rivers and Railways on Sundays, May 1841, House of Lords Journal, 1841, Appendix Two; Reports from Commissioners, Railway Gauges, BPP, 1845, XI, p.79.

at Banbury with their crews sleeping on board, and 33 boatmen spent the night in the town. Many were natives of Banbury or of canalside villages like Bletchington and Shipton. The majority stayed in Mill Lane and Cherwell Street near the wharves, but others were scattered through the town, two of them in the notorious Royal Oak beerhouse in Calthorpe Street.(1)

Banbury's market was one of the principal trading centres in the Midlands in the early nineteenth century. A dealer told a government commissioner in 1845 that it was the largest market he knew, and when asked 'In all respects do you consider Banbury to be a very important place?', he replied 'Just so', C. S. Read described Banbury in 1854 as 'the most businesslike and thriving town in the county', and compared it favourably with Oxford. In the mid-1840s about 350,000 quarters of corn were annually despatched northwards from Banbury by canal, and grain traffic to Birmingham was quoted as evidence of the need for a railway. Barley was sent to brewers in Dudley, and wool to Leicester and Kidderminster. Waggons and vans took butter, pigs, sheep and poultry to the London markets, and one Banbury carrier retained an agent at Newgate to handle his butter business. Cattle were driven from Banbury to Smithfield, and the brothers Buckett purchased fat sheep in the district to be driven to London.(2) The wholesale trade in agricultural

(1) 1851 Census, PRO, HO 107. See also p.26

(2) Reports from Commissioners, Railway Gauges, BPP, 1845, XI, pp.62,66,70,79,392-93; C. S. Read, op.cit., pp.189-90; G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.18,49,69; T. W. Boss, op.cit., pp.4,8; K. Bonser, The Drovers, 1970, p.194; J. Steane, The Northamptonshire Landscape, 1974, pp.247-49.

produce was Banbury's most important economic activity, but it employed only 64 people, 1.58 per cent of the employed population.(1) The turnover of millers, woolstaplers and seed merchants seems to have been substantial, and it is possible that they operated at lower profit margins than most retailers. The transactions of one firm of millers and mealmen who banked with Gilletts occupied 42 ledger pages in three years, a quite exceptional figure.(2)

Banbury's economy revolved around its two long-established banks. The Cobb family had been active in the weaving trade and the Presbyterian congregation since the early eighteenth century. Their Old Bank in High Street, founded in 1703, was administered successively by Timothy Cobb (1755-1839) and by his sons Timothy Rhodes Cobb (1797-1875) and Edward Cobb (1806 - 1899). It was amalgamated in 1853 with banks from Buckingham and Aylesbury to form the Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Union Bank, which was absorbed by Lloyds in 1902.(3) The New Bank in Cornhill was founded by Richard Heydon in 1784 and on his retirement in 1819 it was bought by the Tawney family, who in 1822 sold it to Joseph Ashby Gillett, a Quaker from Shipston-on-Stour, who had acted as an agent for Cobbs. Henry Tawney, then a minor, retained a partnership in the concern. Gillett purchased the bank with the aid of a loan from his brother-in-law Joseph Gibbons, whose family had holdings in banks in Birmingham and Swansea. The New Bank only

(1) See Table Three

(2) A. Taylor, op.cit., p.26.

(3) R. S. Sayers, Lloyds Bank in the History of English Banking, 1957, p.201.

narrowly survived the financial crisis of 1825, but by the thirties it was prospering.(1)

Both banks were owned by Dissenting families whose wealth originated in the weaving trade. Both lived in imposing houses in the town centre. Both owned property in the town. Yet the two banks epitomised the polarisation of local society. The Cobbs were conscious of their long Dissenting lineage, and their radicalism, and proud that their family motto 'God with us' was that of the New Model Army.(2) They were active in many organisations identified with Liberalism and Dissent. Joseph Ashby Gillett was circumspect in his political views, but his partner Henry Tawney was a Conservative parliamentary candidate, and it was believed that Gillett himself was a Tory. He supported some Dissenting causes but his customers included Anglican charitable societies, the Poor Law Union, the Agricultural Association and several Conservative landowners, all of which identified the bank with Anglicanism and Conservatism. It is doubtful whether most of the banks' customers decided where to deposit their money for ideological reasons. Banbury Conservatives often complained that farmers and gentry behaved treasonably by banking with Cobbs. Nevertheless, organisations which had political or religious links deposited their money accordingly, and the banks stood on either side of the deepest division in local respectable society.

(1) A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.1-15,24-36,38-41.

(2) Dr. Williams's Library, 'Some traditions and historical recollections relating to the Old Presbyterian Meeting House at Banbury by Edward Cobb', 1888, pp.3-6.

The profession of attorney was one of the traditional occupations of all market towns. Between 1653 and 1723 eight different attorneys are recorded in the Banbury baptisms and burials register.(1) The market town solicitors were the principal local agents of the major insurance companies. They channelled the savings of the moderately wealthy into profitable investments. They facilitated transfers of land and businesses. They were sometimes entrepreneurs in the development of property. Their creative instincts are largely obscured, but their role in the community in the early nineteenth century was nevertheless positive rather than passive. The number of legal practices in Banbury between 1830 and 1851 varied between seven and ten, the fluctuations being caused by amalgamations, and the attempts of newcomers to establish themselves.(2) The practices of the Bignell and Aplin families were linked with the North family and the old corporation, and their traditions were continued by Conservative solicitors like George Moore, clerk to the Poor Law Union. In the early 1830s there came to prominence a group of solicitors who influenced the development of the local economy at many critical points, dominated local government and provided leadership and direction for many important voluntary organisations. The oldest among them was

(1) J. S. W. Gibson, Baptism and Burial Register of Banbury, Oxfordshire, pt.II 1653-1723, 1969.

(2) Biographical details which follow are taken from the Banbury Parish Registers; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; 1841 Census, HO 873; 1851 Census, HO 107; BG, 12 July 1860.

James Wake Golby, senior partner in the practice of Golby, Munton and Draper, a Unitarian, who was aged 60 in 1830. His partner, John Munton, an Anglican, was 46 in 1830, and a native of Bow, Middlesex. Their junior was Thomas Draper, aged 27 in 1830, a native of Kenilworth, whose family had land at Culworth. In 1831 he married the daughter of another Banbury solicitor, Thomas Tims, and was for some years tenant of the Vicarage. Tims was born in Cropredy, was 51 in 1830, and had been in Banbury since before 1810. He was an Anglican, and it was said at the time of his death in 1860 that he was 'a devoted supporter of Liberal views before liberalism became fashionable'. Francis Francillon, great grandson of a Huguenot refugee, and son of a purser in the Royal Navy, moved to work in Thomas Tims's office in 1838, after a spell in Chipping Norton. He professed no religion but his wife was a Quaker and he was buried in the Friends' graveyard at Adderbury. Two other lawyers were connected with the group, but were not active in public affairs until the late 1830s. John Munton's son William was aged only 15 in 1830. Edward Cobb was a solicitor as well as a banker, but never practised in Banbury. He was aged only 24 in 1830 and had then little interest in public affairs. This group comprised less than half of the solicitors in Banbury. Like Cobbs Bank, the partnership of Golby, Munton and Draper was a prestigious concern which attracted the custom of many wealthy men who did not share the partners' political views. Francis Francillon frequently appeared in court as the advocate of disadvantaged or unpopular defendants, and was a specialist in electoral registration. He made a magnificent declaration of the rights of the meanest defendants to legal representation when acting for two

prostitutes in 1859.(1) These solicitors were the source of much of the movement towards change in nineteenth century Banbury. Like most market town lawyers they had considerable funds at their disposal. As a Banbury clergyman remarked, 'the country attorney's office was often the office of a money lender - money lent on land or furniture or even on stock on farms or in workshops'.(2) The solicitors actively promoted railways, housing developments and public utilities. As political and administrative innovators they shaped the character of the town. They can perhaps best be likened to the groups of native lawyers who in the twentieth century have guided ex-colonial territories into independence.

The number of medical practices in Banbury between 1830 and 1850 varied between four and eight and in 1851 there were 12 doctors in the town. The doctors had many family connections with the legal profession. The much respected Robert Brayne was succeeded by his nephews Henry Robert and Thomas Brayne, both of whom married into legal families. John Wise was succeeded by his son Robert Stanton Wise, and his daughter was the second wife of Thomas Draper. Charles Brickwell married the daughter of William Munton. The evidence which the doctors presented to the Board of Health in 1849 shows that they were well acquainted with conditions in the poorest parts of the town, and the profession provided numerous councillors, several mayors and officers in many voluntary

(1) BG, 6 Jan. 1859.

(2) Regents Park College Library, Oxford, W. T. Henderson, Recollections of his Life.

societies.

Eighteen men and 49 women were engaged in teaching in Banbury in 1851, in establishments ranging from dame schools, through the publicly accountable institutions to exclusive boarding schools. There were 82 pupils at five boarding schools in Banbury. They drew almost all of their scholars from the neighbourhood, but those run by Rebecca Eason and Genevieve Dupins attracted support from a wider area. At Samuel Hill's Banbury Academy 18 of the 27 boarders were the sons of farmers.(1)

Retailers and craftsmen formed over 30 per cent of the working population of Banbury. It is impossible to draw a clear distinction between the two. Most self-employed craftsmen sold the shoes, suits, saddles or sofas which they had made, just as grocers, ironmongers, butchers and drapers sold goods produced by others. The variety of goods made in Banbury was remarkable, including clay tobacco pipes, organs, wood carvings, barometers, guns, pumps, trunks, gloves, umbrellas, candles and soda water. Appellations like 'cabinet maker', 'watchmaker' and 'tinplate worker' obscure numerous specialisms. Apart from cloth, hosiery and imported foods, there were few goods on sale in Banbury that could not have been produced in the town.

It is also difficult to draw distinctions between masters and employees. Many shoemakers and tailors who worked on their own accounts also undertook tasks for other masters, while men on the tramp constantly swelled the number of journeymen in the town. Shoemakers paused on their way to work in Oxford in

(1) 1851 Census, PRO HO 107.

term time, and in 1851 there were seven tailors staying at the Catherine Wheel, which may have been the tailors' trade house.(1) Eighteen shoemakers were listed in the directory in 1832, 26 in 1841, and 29 in 1851, but the number of people working in the trade rose from 84 to 166 between 1841 and 1851. Only one Banbury shoemaker in 1851 employed as many as six people, and eleven of the journeymen in the town appear to have been on the tramp. There were 13 master tailors listed in the 1832 directory, 23 in 1841 and 24 in 1851. The censuses show 94 men in the trade in 1841 and 107 in 1851. There were 211 dressmakers in Banbury in 1851, nearly twice the number of tailors.(2)

The principal retailers occupied shops in the lower part of High Street, the Market Place and Parsons Street. On average the drapers, grocers, chemists and ironmongers employed less than two people each, but the leading men in each trade employed six or even more. In 1851 James Austin, a chemist, employed an assistant and two apprentices who lived in and three porters who did not. Joseph Malsbury a grocer employed six of whom two male assistants and two apprentices lived in. In 1841 Robert Kirby, a draper, had seven warehousemen and an assistant living in, and in 1851, had two sons in the trade, two assistants, a clerk and an apprentice in his household. Retailing was not dominated by long-established family firms. 43 drapers, grocers, ironmongers and chemists in the lower

(1) 1841 Census, PRO HO 873; 1851 Census, HO 107; G. Herbert, op. cit., pp.21-23.

(2) Figures from 1841 Census PRO HO 873; 1851 Census, HO 107. See Table Three.

part of High Street, Market Place and Parsons Street in 1851, only fourteen had been born in Banbury, 11 came from nearby villages and 18 from such distant places as Bath, Hardisley (Herefs.) and Staines (Middx.) In 1857 when Banbury was more prosperous than it had been in the 1830s and 40s a newspaper said the town was 'overstocked in every department of business'.(1) Rivalry between traders was fierce, but competition was inhibited by trade regulations and unwritten conventions. Hours of opening were long but regulated. In 1845 it was agreed that shops should close at 7.00 p.m. in winter, but this closure time was not fully being observed in 1857, and it was never observed on Saturdays.(2) The shoemaker who wished to exceed the regulated hours had to complete his hammering before closure time, and continue less noisy tasks in a blacked-out room.(3)

Shopping habits were closely observed. To Elizabeth Gaskell's Miss Browning, the opportunity to furnish a house was welcome because 'the disposal of money involved the patronage of tradespeople'.(4) To shop was to choose, not just between competing merchants, but between Tories and Liberals, between churchmen and Dissenters. In the town of Mark Rutherford's first pastorate there were 'two shops of

(1) BA, 22 Jan. 1857.

(2) BG, 25 Sep. 1845.

(3) G. Herbert, op.cit., p.20.

(4) Elizabeth Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, 1971 edn., p.144.

each trade one which was patronised by Church and Tories and another by Dissenters and Whigs'.(1) There were rather more shops in Banbury. The directory in 1832 listed 16 butchers, 17 grocers, 10 drapers and 18 bakers, and the man seeking to buy a watch or have a haircut had the choice of four jewellers or six hairdressers. Nevertheless the situation was essentially as Rutherford saw it. Religion, politics and membership of voluntary societies could substantially affect a trader's business. As late as 1874 a Banbury co-operator summed up the unenviable lot of the market town trader:

> 'Look at the shopkeeper, willingly or unwillingly compelled to sacrifice every vestige of manly independence, especially he whose lot is cast in a country town. He worships his Maker, not after the dictates of his own conscience, but of that of his customers. He votes at an election, not to serve his country, or to save her from ruin, but to please his customers; in short, his every action is governed by his till. He ... depends upon the will and caprice of others for bread and is a slave'.(2)

Pressure could be exercised by the organised working class as well as the wealthy. The political power of the working class shopper in Huddersfield was summed up in the song title 'Non-Electors can Vote on a Saturday Night'.(3) In Banbury threats of exclusive dealing were commonplace. When the shoemaker George Herbert attracted aristocratic patronage his rivals

(1) Mark Rutherford, Autobiography, 1969 edn., pp.26-27.

(2) BCR, Feb.1874.

(3) John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868, 1966, pp.100-05.

claimed it was because he was a Tory.(1) The position of the trader was further weakened by the long credit which was customarily given to upper and middle class customers. Herbert related that he was never so poor as when his business was at its most successful:

> 'I could have got along well if I could have got in the money, but my customers were all noblemen, parsons, lawyers and doctors, and the parsons were the worst of all to pay. I used now to go out into the country ... not for orders, but to look up money for wages etc.'(2)

In 1847 it was proposed to make half-yearly rather than annual tendering of accounts the regular practice in the town, and the Banbury Guardian quoted with approval the remarks of a Somerset contemporary:

> 'Tradesmen look forward with keen solicitude to the end of the year when they may without fear or offence present yearly or half-yearly bills. On their success in receiving these accounts much of their personal comfort and that of their families depends'.(3)

In such circumstances the pressure of working class customers who paid cash or were granted only short credit were naturally powerful.

The inhibitions of retailing in Victorian market towns may explain the popularity of the doctrine of Self-Help, not as a creed for action, but as a testament of achievement from which vicarious compensatory pleasures could be sought. Orators who extolled men who rose to greatness from humble

(1) G. Herbert, op.cit., p.20.

(2) Ibid, p.20.

(3) Taunton Courier, quoted in BG, 30 Dec.1847.

origins probably had much appeal for tradesmen who faced many competitors but were forbidden by convention to compete aggressively with them. For the retailer there were few escape routes from such frustrations, but there were possibilities open to craftsmen which were of great significance to the growth of market towns. One was a horizontal method of escape, the spreading of the trader's energies into additional occupations. Part-time government posts were eagerly sought, and there was fierce competition for the most menial posts offered by the Poor Law Union in 1835.(1) J. G. Walford, a watchmaker, was Registrar of Marriages. William Thompson, chairmaker, was Superintendent of the Borough Police. William Hutchings, basket maker, was High Bailiff to the County Court, William Brain the postmaster, sold leather to shoemakers.(2) Robert Gardner, the gaoler, 'embarked in trade and filled numerous lucrative employements during his gaolership'.(3)

Innkeeping could easily be combined with other jobs. Several Banbury public houses took their names from their landlords' occupation, and may have served as trade houses. In the Bridge Street area in 1851, a butcher ran the Railway Inn, a millwright the Millwright's Arms, a coal merchant the Steam Packet, a boatman the Jolly Waterman, a farmer the Leathern Bottle, a hairdresser the Britannia, and a plasterer the Fox. The landlord of the Swan was a rose grower, lattice wire maker, auctioneer and sheriff's officer. The licensee of

(1) BPL, Banbury Board of Guardians Minutes 1835-36.

(2) Details from Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, 1851 Census, PRO HO 107.

(3) BG, 13 Jan.1848.

the Woolpack was a sausage maker, gingerbread dealer, tripe seller, cork cutter, baker and brewer.(1)

Occupations which demanded no formal qualifications were particularly suitable as secondary trades. George Herbert, a shoemaker, adopted his hobby, photography, as his means of livelihood. Toymaking and selling stationery were common secondary occupations. William Bunton, foundry fitter and Chartist, was a newsagent and toy dealer. Richard Hale, saddler, was a newsvendor, and his wife and daughter were dressmakers. Thomas Willetts, a hairdresser, sold toys while his wife made breeches and gloves. Insurance was the retailer's easiest means of horizontal expansion. The 1851 census reveals only one full-time insurance official in Banbury, but the directory in that year lists 23 agents for fire and life offices. Seven were solicitors, but the remainder included a chemist, a dentist, two ironmongers, a draper, a printer, a grocer, a timber merchant and a bank clerk. An insurance agency could provide extra income for a man who subsisted largely on private means. James Cadbury held two agencies after he gave up his grocery business in 1846, and Alfred Beesley, the historian, was agent to the Norwich Union, when he was not following literary and scientific pursuits.(2) Servants' registration offices were first listed in the Banbury directory in 1843. In 1854 a newspaper claimed that they were rendering useless the traditional hiring fairs.(3)

(1) Details in this and subsequent paragraphs from Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, 1851 Census, HO 107.

(2) BG, 15 April 1847; OC & CC, 31 July 1841.

(3) BG, 12 Oct.1854.

There were six registry offices in 1851, kept by a hosier, a grocer, a shoemaker, an eating house proprietor and two milliners.

Several bank clerks had secondary occupations. John Conworth, clerk at Cobbs, lived at the bank where his daughter ran a school. William Sutton Owen, a clerk at Gilletts, had a hatter's business. Sylvester Caines of the London and County Bank ran an insurance agency. The most enterprising bank clerk was William Barrett, who, by 1825 was earning £100 p.a. as a clerk at Gilletts. Two years later he was expelled from the Society of Friends for being married by a priest. In 1841 he was living at the bank, and operated an insurance agency, a corn and malt business and a milk-selling concern, and during the 1840s began a steam saw mill and a brickyard. In 1851 he was still clerk for Gilletts and employed six men and a boy on his own account.(1)

The other means of securing independence from political and religious pressures was by vertical development, the production of articles of such originality or such high quality that they could be sold beyond the confines of Banbury, or were indispensible to townspeople. Market town society could thus stimulate innovation and excellence. The mayor boasted in 1850 that the townspeople had 'taken out more patents for their own inventions and improvements on the inventions of others, than perhaps any town of its size in the kingdom'.(2) One Banbury watchmaker built a machine for tagging laces,

(1) Details from Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; 1851 Census, PRO, HO 107; A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.44,184; BG, 22 Feb. 1849; ORO, BMM/I/5, Minutes of the Banbury Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, 1824-32.

(2) BG, 27 June 1850.

while another drew the wires which were used for cutting the pile of plush. A cutler made such excellent buckshorn-handled knives that country people reckoned to buy no others. In a letter from upstate New York in 1833 an emigrant pleaded with his father who was to follow him to 'bring a pocket knife for me, of Thomas's make, Banbury'.(1) William Bigg, chemist, and founder of the Mechanics' Institute, invented a well-known sheep dipping composition.(2) Twelve Banbury tradesmen exhibited in the Crystal Palace in 1851.(3) Many Banbury tradesmen succeeded in reaching national markets. The printer and publisher J. G. Rusher sold children's books all over the country.(4) The makers of Banbury Cakes sent their wares 'by coach, chaise, waggon, cart horse and foot into all parts of this kingdom'. Samuel Beesley sent Banbury Cakes to America, and, once, to Australia. In 1838 Daniel Claridge despatched 400 dozen to the East Indies.(5) Cakes were usually despatched in wickerwork baskets made from the willows in the local osier beds by Banbury's 16 basket makers.

There were two major manufacturing industries in Banbury. One, the making of plush, was long-established. The other, the manufacture of agricultural implements, was in the process

(1) G. Herbert, op.cit., p.99; NH, 1 Mar.1834.

(2) BG, 27 July 1847; BG, 11 Sep.1879; BA, 11 Sep.1879.

(3) BG, 22 May 1851.

(4) I. and P. Opie, The Oxford Dictionary of English Nursery Rhymes, 1951, p.65; L. Pearson, Banbury Chap Books, 1890, pp.24-25

(5) OH, 13 Jan.1838; BG, 13 Mar. 1851.

of emerging from the local ironmongery and millwrighting trades.

Textiles had flourished in Banbury since the Middle Ages. In the early eighteenth century the parish registers record garter, jersey, silk, linen, woollen and worsted weavers.(1) The manufacture of girth cloth was of some importance by 1750, but the speciality of the region became the making of shags or plush, a fabric with a double warp of two twisted threads of worsted or cotton, and a weft of a single thread of silk or mohair. It was used for upholstery, hats, liveries and for finishing processes in the manufacture of other high quality fabrics. Plush was sold in an international market, and in the 1790s it was suggested, with some exaggeration, that most of it went to Russia.(2) The trade was characterised by a strong weavers' club. One master complained in 1787 'Banbury is not the place for a manufactory, the Masters being so much under the control of the workmen' and a JP reported in 1793, 'they have associated, ... formed laws of their own, and set those of the country at defiance'. The club was re-constituted in 1822 when it still controlled entry into the trade.(3) Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century there were three or four firms active in the trade, although amalgamations and changes in the partnerships were frequent.

(1) J. S. W. Gibson, op.cit., passim.

(2) Sir F. M. Eden, The State of the Poor, ed. A. G. L. Rogers, 1938, pp.279-80.

(3) R. I. Beckinsale, 'The Plush Industry of North Oxfordshire', Oxoniensia, XXVIII, 1963, p.57; P. R. L. Horn, ed., 'The New Society of Plush Weavers: Articles, Rules and Orders, 1822', C & CH, III, 11, 1968, pp.199-202; A. Aspinall, The Early English Trade Unions, 1949, p.19.

When trade was plentiful, wages reached 30s. and even 40s. a week, but slumps were frequent, and plushmaking was often said to be in decline.

In 1838 the Banbury plush trade was controlled by three firms, Gilletts with 150 looms, the brothers Baughen with 120, and Harris, Banbury and Harris with 160. There were about 300 weavers in the district, many of whom had several looms. In 1841 there were 105 resident in the town, while 18 lived at Brailes, 35 at Shutford, 34 at Bloxham, 27 at Middleton Cheney and 34 at Adderbury.(1) Most of the worsted yarn was brought in from elsewhere. Baughens had a factory in which there were 30 hand looms, but most weavers worked at home, and the masters' premises were used chiefly for commissioning and taking orders. Most of the cloth was dyed in Banbury. In 1837 Gilletts purchased an embossing machine from Henry Bessemer, which enabled them to supply orders for Windsor Castle and the House of Commons. The trade club formed a lodge of Robert Owen's Grand National Consolidated Trades Union in 1834, but the masters refused to employ those involved and the lodge was dissolved. The club was never again so powerful. In 1838 it had only 21 members, although it was able to forbid the entry of women to the trade, to restrict entry to the eldest sons of weavers, and to ensure that each man took only one apprentice. Wages averaged £30 a year in 1838, a lower level than in the 1790s. The 1841 census records 260 plushmakers in England, almost all of them in the Banbury region. The only other

(1) Report of the Assistant Commissioner on Hand-Loom Weavers, BPP, 1840, XXIV, pp.333-36; A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.85-86.

significant centre was Coventry, where there were 47 weavers.(1) Plush weaving suffered severely in the economic crisis of 1839-42. Gilletts suffered a heavy loss in 1842, and the family home was surrounded by about 100 demonstrating weavers. They gave upplushmaking in 1848-49 when J. A. Gillett was disappointed to receive only £6,000 for his business. Harris, Banbury and Harris gave up in 1843-44.(2) In 1851 there were 123 plush weavers in Banbury, with 16 women and unskilled men employed in hair combing, winding, harness-making, shaving and portering. The trade employed 4.5 per cent of the working population. About half the weavers in Banbury had been born in the surrounding countryside, seven at Middleton Cheney, eight at Bloxham and six in Adderbury, but none in Shutford where the trade was prospering. Among the weavers in Neithrop were several recent migrants. James Wright had several children, one aged only four, who had been born in Adderbury. Henry Hunt had children of four and two born at Little Bourton. Fewer plushmakers worked at home. By 1851, 88 people were employed at Baughen's factory in North Bar, where only 30

(1) P. R. L. Horn, 'The Banbury Weavers' Union of 1834', C & CH, III, 11, 1968, pp.203-06; Report of the Assistant Commissioner on Hand-Loom Weavers, BPP, 1840, XXIV, pp.333-34; A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.79-80; R. P. Beckinsale, op.cit., pp.58-62.

(2) A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.89-90.

had worked in 1838. Worsted and mohair were spun on 1036 spindles with a 12 h.p. engine, but there were no attempts to introduce power looms at Banbury.(1)

The weavers had a reputation for their skills, their education and their political maturity. George Herbert's father was proud of his ability to turn to any branch of the trade.(2) They strongly supported the old Dissenting denominations. In Neithrop almost 40 per cent were Dissenters, compared with 25 per cent of tradesmen, and 10 per cent of labourers. Many weavers lived in overcrowded houses on The Bank in Neithrop or in Monument Street. Their living conditions were no better than those of the rest of the working class nor were their wages higher. Their claim to be the labour aristrocracy of Banbury was based on skill, education and prestige. Thomas Carroll a former weaver made his living in 1851 by carrying a basket. Two weavers had become tailors and four were labourers. The conditions regulating entry to the trade had been discarded. Four families in Neithrop had two sons who were weavers. The average age of weavers in 1851 was lower than in 1841. Only 12 of the weavers in Banbury were over 60, while there had been 25 in that age group in 1841. Nearly 80 per cent were under 50 and 19 were under 20.(3)

The Cobb family's girth weaving business catered for a

(1) 1851 Census, PRO, HO 107; Vera Hodgkins, 'The Plush Industry in Shutford', C & CH, VI 3, 1975, pp.59-75; Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966, pp.110-11; A. Taylor, op.cit., p.95; R. F. Beckinsale, op.cit., p.64.

(2) G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.3-5.

(3) B. Trinder, Banbury's Poor, pp.110-11.

national market in the 1840s but the estimate in 1838 that it employed 40 people seems an exaggeration. Nine weavers were recorded in the 1841 census and seven in 1851, which suggests that the trade was not of great significance in the town's economy, although a large canal-side factory had been built in 1837.(1)

The proportion of the population engaged in engineering was small, only 90 people, or 2.21 per cent of those at work, but engineering in 1851 was on the eve of a period of expansion, a development of the skills which had been growing among Banbury's ironmongers and millwrights since 1800. Ironmongers sold agricultural implements made by millwrights, and sometimes sponsored the production of particular items, or took up ironfounding themselves. At the Banbury Agricultural Association meeting in 1838 Richard Edmunds, the ironmonger, attracted attention with a chaff-cutter made for him by a Mr. Riley, a member of a well-known Banbury family of millwrights. Edmunds won the silver medal of the Agricultural Society of Scotland for the implement in 1841.(2) James Gardner, born in 1785, was a Baptist ironmonger who, in 1839 leased land in Parson's Meadow Lane from Lyne Spurrett and Edward Cobb, and set up a small foundry for the manufacture of a hay and straw cutter patented in 1815, a fat cutter for soap and candle makers, and the Banbury Turnip Cutter, patented

(1) Report of the Assistant Commissioner on Hand-Loom Weavers, BPP, 1840, XXIV, pp.333-36; 1841 Census, HO 873; 1851 Census, HO 107.

(2) BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, p.87; OH, 16 June 1838.

in 1834. He acquired a considerable reputation. When a rival firm produced a turnip cutter at the 1845 Royal Show, a critic commented, 'Mr. Gardner of Banbury has at length met formidable rivals'. He purchased the freehold of the foundry site in 1844, and by the time of his death on St. Stephen's Day 1846 he was employing between 20 and 30 people. An obituarist described him as 'the inventor of many clever pieces of mechanism' and said there was a demand for the turnip cutter from the continent and the colonies far beyond any possible supply. Gardner himself had claimed 'no machine has ever been offered to the public that will cut turnips into pieces of the same size with so little labour, or that is so little liable to get out of repair'.(1) Charles and John Lampitt had a millwright's shop at the junction of Paradise and Water Lane in Neithrop which dated from 1796. About 1837 they set up the Vulcan Foundry on the opposite side of the Warwick Road. A steam pumping engine was supplied to John Hunt's brewery soon afterwards, and in 1847 one of their engines was demonstrated working a threshing machine.(2)

Engineering in Banbury was based on the workshop rather than the factory. In Neithrop there were 27 skilled men, but only seven labourers working in foundries. Ten of the 27 were

(1) ORO 315, Samuelson Deeds, Lease 24 Aug.1849, A. B. Rye and Benjamin Gardner to Bernhard Samuelson, Schedule of deeds made over to Bernhard Samuelson on his purchases of the foundry from the Trustees under the will of James Gardner, 1856; NH, 5 Jan.1839. JRASE, VI, 1845, 303-23; BG, 12 Oct.1848; BG, 13 Sep.1849; BG, 21 Nov.1850.

(2) NH, 4 Sep.1847; G.C.J.Hartland,'The Vulcan Foundry,Banbury', C & CH, III, 12, 1968, pp.223,228-29; Banbury Museum, Lampitt trade notices.

Banburians, almost all Lampitts or Rileys, one came from a local village and the rest from as far away as Devon, Essex and Newcastle upon Tyne. They were predominantly young men, who if they were married, lived in comfortable houses, and they showed greater indifference to religion than any other occupational group.(1)

The scale of engineering changed after the death of James Gardner. His son, also James, was only 16, and his executors, the surgeon A. B. Rye, and his kinsman Benjamin Gardner, decided to sell the foundry and keep the ironmonger's shop in High Street. The foundry, with the rights for the turnip and chaff cutters, 'patented machines in great request', was put on the market in January 1847, but it was not until August 1849 that Rye and Gardner agreed with Bernhard Samuelson, the 29 year old son of a Jewish mercantile family with businesses in Hull and Liverpool, to lease the foundry for seven years from 1 September 1849, from which time it was called the Britannia Works. Samuelson had a commercial apprenticeship, and in 1841 took charge of the continental business of Sharpe, Stewart and Co. the Manchester engineers. In 1846 he established a locomotive works at Tours, but he was driven back to England by the French Revolution of 1848. His first contacts with Banbury probably came through his brother Martin, an engineer on the Buckinghamshire Railway, who married a surgeon's daughter from Middleton Cheney in March 1849. By local standards the foundry was a substantial business, and the difficulties encountered in selling it may have caused concern to the town's rulers. A. B. Rye was closely identified with

(1) B. Trinder, Banbury's Poor, pp.111-12.

the Liberal Elite, and it is likely that Cobbs Bank were involved in the sale. Many years later Samuelson referred to 'Mr. (T.R.) Cobb ... my oldest friend in Banbury'.(1)

The only industry comparable with textiles and engineering in Banbury was brewing in which 33 people were directly employed in 1851, together with 15 maltsters. The most important brewery, in North Bar, had belonged to James Barnes, the canal engineer, who was twice mayor of Banbury. In 1803 his daughter married Richard Austin, who by 1806 was a partner in the brewery. The following year Austin built the substantial house now numbered 31 The Green. In 1814 the whole business became Austin's property on payment of 5 per cent per annum to Barnes on his share. It was valued at £37,061, and included 23 public houses, and two malthouses. In 1832 the brewery was assessed for the Poor Rate at £96.10.00d., by far the most valuable property in the borough. The Red Lion, by comparison, was worth £72.10.00d. In 1840 hops and spirits were being purchased from dealers in London and conveyed to Banbury by canal. George Herbert recalled that ale was exported to India, and on two consecutive days in 1840, 63 and 66 casks were despatched to Liverpool. Other consignments were sent to Birmingham, Brierley Hill and London. The value of the concern declined between 1814 and the time of Austin's death in 1840, when it was assessed at £29,000. Only five of the 31 properties

(1) BG, 21 Jan. 1847; BG, 12 Oct.1848; BG, 13 Sep.1849; BG, 27 Sep.1849; BG, 18 Nov.1850; ORO 515, Samuelson deeds, lease 24 Aug.1849, A. B. Rye and Benjamin Gardner to Bernhard Samuelson; BN, 31 Mar.1849; BN, 4 Aug.1849; Journal of the Iron and Steel Institute, I, 1909, pp.504-07.

were then free of mortgage obligations. Control of the brewery passed to Barnes son of Richard Austin, who sold some of the property in 1842. In 1848-49 a partnership was negotiated with John Nixon Harman, and from 1850 the name Austin was dropped from the business. Cobbs Bank were probably involved in the merger, which was negotiated by their associated solicitors, Draper and Munton. Edward Cobb's father-in-law was one of the mortgagees.(1)

The other large brewery was that of Thomas and John Hunt. The elder Thomas Hunt bought the Unicorn in 1807, and ran a malting business there. By 1832 it had passed to his grandson John, who, about 1839, built a brewery in Bridge Street. By 1841 he had taken another Thomas Hunt as his partner. John Hunt died in 1841 and in 1850 William Edmunds entered the concern, which was employing 16 men the following year.(2)

Farming was an important part of the local economy within as well as around Banbury. In 1851, 288 people in the parish were directly involved in farming and market gardening, and some of the 302 general labourers doubtless worked on farms. In the 1840s there were about 30 farms in the parish. The 1851 census records 29 farmers of whom 26 were working. They occupied some 3,432 of the 4,634 acres of the parish, and employed 140 people, less than 70 per cent of the farmworkers identified on the census. Banbury obviously functioned as an open village, providing accommodation for labourers on farms

(1) ORO 315, Austin Papers, Temp. Box 10, Bundles F, G. H. I. K. L. M. N. O. P; ORO, BB/LIV/11, Mr. Humphries's First Rate, 1832; G. Herbert, op.cit., p.111 1851 Census PRO HO 107.
(2) Anon., Hunt Edmunds & Co. 1896-1946, 1946, pp.2-5; OC & CC, 14 Sep.1839.

in nearby closed parishes. Most farm workers were born locally. There were only a few labourers from Ireland and distant parts of England in the lodging houses. Farm labouring was largely an hereditary occupation. In Neithrop, of 16 boys under 20 working on farms, only one, the son of a bricklayer, was not the offspring of an agricultural worker. Few sons of farm workers followed any other occupation. Most began regular work about the age of 13, and only three of the 91 farm labourers in Neithrop were over 60.(1)

Banbury was a base for hawkers who toured its hinterland. Flora Thompson recalled those who visited Juniper Hill: a fish and fruit salesman, a baker, a brewer's outrider, tinkers, grinders, gypsies with cabbage nets and clothes pegs, tramps with shoelaces, matches and lavender bags, and packmen and pedlars with haberdashery.(2) Many such travellers stayed in Banbury. In 1841 the Queen's Head accommodated nine clothmen and a silk mercer, all of them Irish, and three Irish linen dealers slept there ten years later. Most of the 42 hawkers staying in Banbury in 1851 were Irish. There were three silk mercers at the Waggon and Horses, and five travelling drapers at the adjacent house. James Killin, of Crouch Street, born in County Down, was a silk mercer who had lived in Banbury since at least 1835. A hawker of toys born in Carlisle and a travelling jeweller born in Surrey stayed at the South Bar lodging house. Parked in Back Lane was a cart from which Charles Hands, a native of Birmingham, conducted a travelling

(1) 1851 Census, PRO, HO 107; B. Trinder, Banbury's Poor, pp.108-10.

(2) Flora Thompson, Lark Rise to Candleford, 1957 edn., pp. 120-35.

bazaar. At the Crown was Joseph Marks, a travelling jeweller, born in Poland. Banburians were involved in these trades through 'swag shops', like that of Jabez Thompson, where toys and cheap jewellery were supplied to hawkers.(1)

Banbury's calendar of fairs was rationalised in 1836 by the new corporation. There were 13 annual fairs, most of which were cattle sales and had no other functions. Some hiring of farmworkers took place at the March fair, wool was sold in July, and the December fair featured fat cattle for the Christmas trade.(2) The Holy Thursday Fair was traditionally a holiday, but its recreational function declined after a smallpox epidemic broke out at the event in 1827.(3) The horse fair held around Old Twelfth Day remained important throughout the nineteenth century. In 1850 the presence of many London dealers was reported, prices were high, and 'few who had a carthorse to sell did not get more money than they expected for it'.(4)

The Michaelmas fair which attracted farmers, labourers, dealers, showmen, cheap jacks and pickpockets from all over England had a compelling magic which none of the other fairs could rival. The young Joseph Ashby, on his first visit in 1870, muttered 'Nijni Novgorod'. A few years later as he worked on the roadside at fair time, an aged traveller told him, 'I shall know I be an old man when I can't get to

(1) 1841 Census, HO, HO 873; 1851 Census, HO 107; G. Herbert, op.cit., pp.91-92.

(2) A. Beesley, The History of Banbury, 1841, p.560.

(3) Bod. Lib., Banbury Parish Register, 1827; OC & CC, 6 May 1837; JOJ, 10 May 1834.

(4) BG, 24 Jan.1850.

Banbury Fair'.(1) As a cattle sale the fair declined in the 1830s and 40s as more business was conducted at regular weekly and monthly markets. In 1832 there were 4,600 sheep, 1,200 cattle, 300 pigs and 200 horses on offer, and in 1834 over 1,500 cattle and 3,000 sheep. Such levels were not maintained. In 1846 there were only 1,000 cattle and 200 sheep.(2) The fair was the occasion for the sale of the soft, shallow, pale Banbury cheese, but supplies diminished during the 1840s. Only one cartload arrived in 1847 and none at all in 1848.(3) The fair remained the occasion when farmers sold their grain crops. It was the greatest hiring fair in the south Midlands, and such vast crowds of grooms, waggoners, shepherds and dairymaids waited to be hired in the Market Place between Butchers Row and Parsons Street that shop windows had to be boarded up to avoid damage from the crush of humanity on the pavements.(4) The fair drew celebrated entertainments like Hilton's and Wombwell's menageries, and was a festival for pickpockets and swindlers. For Banbury shopkeepers, particularly the drapers, the fair began immediately after Michaelmas Day, as servants poured into Banbury:

> 'Experience has taught them that there are few places which are accessible to them where they are so likely to get their money's worth for their money, or find so extensive a choice'.(5)

(1) M. K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1961, p.37.

(2) A. Beesley, op.cit., p.560; BG, 22 Oct.1846.

(3) M. K. Ashby, op.cit., p.37; BG, 21 Oct.1847; BG, 19 Oct.1848.

(4) T. W. Boss, op.cit., pp.2-4.

(5) BG, 21 Oct.1847.

Some shopkeepers could do little business during the fair itself, since their windows were boarded up or blocked by stalls, but the fair period, when crops were sold and labourers were paid was the peak of the trading year.

The Michaelmas Fair epitomised the complexities of the relationship between Banbury and its hinterland. Countrymen demonstrated by their attendance the importance they attached to the market town, and the town's economic dependence on the countryside was clearly evident. It was an occasion on which townsmen liked to feel their superiority, to be ironic about the lightness of foot of rustic dancers in the fair's ball-rooms, to express disgust at the way in which labourers paraded for hire like slaves, to be shocked at how easily they were swindled by metropolitan tricksters. At fair time, as on the occasions of the gentry's annual ball, at the Wesleyan quarterly meeting or the Agricultural Association show, Banbury was the stage on which the dramas of the rural population took place. It was possible to see Banbury either as a community of ungrateful traders who made money from farmers and landowners and refused them the political support which was their due, or as an oasis of political and cultural enlightenment in a desert of reaction. No one doubted that the town and the countryside were economically interdependent, but there were many points at which their cultures clashed. There was a fashion in 1838 for calling Banbury 'The Manchester of Agriculture'. Its relationship with its hinterland was as complex as that of 'the Manchester of Trade' with the nation at large.(1)

(1) NH, 20 Jan.1838; OC & CC, 20 Jan.1838; Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1968 edn., pp.88-138.

Chapter Four.

Two Distinct Camps: the Churches in Banbury, 1830-51.

> 'There is no day in the week on which more general notice is taken than on Sunday: there is no day on which differences are more apparent.'(1)

'Mr. Edmunds, Burgess and Methodist preacher', seconded the Reform candidate for Banbury in the election of 1831. 'Mr. Samuel Beesley, a member of the Society of Friends' helped to nominate the Liberal candidate in 1837.(2) To speak of a man's religion in Banbury in the 1830s or 1840s was as unremarkable as it has always been in Ulster. The numbers of churchmen and dissenters on the borough council were sometimes quoted in newspapers, like football scores.(3) Church rates, Maynooth, Sabbatarianism and the toleration of Catholics were matters on which all active citizens had opinions. To say that a Banburian was a Calvinist, a Churchman or a Quaker revealed as much about him as to call him a butcher, a draper or a weaver.

All of the major English denominations and a variety of sects were represented in Banbury in the early nineteenth century. The level of religious observance in the town was high. On Sunday of the Ecclesiastical Census in 1851, 6,920 attendances were recorded at ten places of worship.(4) No sizeable meetings were excluded from the census, but no returns were made for several minor gatherings, and the totals for four congregations were obviously rounded off. Using the formula

(1) Mark Rutherford, Catherine Furze, 1936 edn., p.69.

(2) John Bull, 9 May 1831, quoted in Diana McClatchey, Oxfordshire Clergy, 1777-1869, 1960, p.211; OC & CC, 29 July 1837.

(3) OC & CC, 14 Aug.1841; OH, 29 Jan.1842.

(4) PRO, HO 129/6/163, Census Papers: Ecclesiastical Returns, Banbury 1851.

devised by W. S. F. Pickering, expressing the number of people at the most numerously attended service at each church as a percentage of the population, the index figure for Banbury is 35.17, rather below the highest county figures, like Bedfordshire with 37, or Huntingdonshire with 55, but far above urban areas like Lancashire which recorded 27, or London with 21.(1) The index figure for Banbury obtained by using the formula employed by Professor Inglis, reached by expressing the total attendances at all services of the day as a percentage of the population, is 78.7, well above the national index for England and Wales which is 61, and also above the national figure for rural areas, which is 71.4, and for towns with over 10,000 people, which is 49.7.(2)

Banbury's medieval church was a magnificent Gothic structure, but by the late eighteenth century its north aisle and crossing were almost ruinous, and the best architectural opinion of the time was that restoration was not feasible.(3) An Act of Parliament was obtained in 1790 for its replacement, under which a trust was established to raise money for and carry out the work.(4) The church was demolished in the latter part of

(1) W. S. F. Pickering, 'The 1851 Religious Census - a useless experiment?', British Journal of Sociology, XVIII, 1967, pp. 382-407.

(2) K. S. Inglis, 'The 1851 Religious Census', Journal of Ecclesiastical History, XI, 1960, pp.74 et seq.

(3) Nicholas Cooper, 'The Building and Furnishing of St. Mary's Church', C & CH, V, 4, 1972, p.63.

(4) 30 Geo. III c.72.

1790, and early in 1791, before sufficient money had been raised or estimates obtained, construction was begun of a new church to the design of Samuel Pepys Cockerell. It was decided to raise 75 per cent of the cost in bonds at five per cent interest. The church was opened in 1797, in an unfinished state, three years later than the Act specified, encumbered with debts and for more than two decades a standing reproach to the town's ruling class. The uncompleted tower was untidily covered with boards.(1) In the years which followed the churchwardens often failed to collect the rate authorised by the Act of Parliament, and sometimes embezzled the proceeds when they did. Charles Robert Cockerell, the distinguished son of the original architect, completed the tower and portico in 1822. It was hoped that income would increase when rating assessments were changed in 1825, but the Trustees were advised that under the Act of 1790, they could collect money only under the old assessments. Some persisted in an attempt to try to use the new assessments but many parishioners refused to pay. For a time no interest was paid to bondholders, but in 1827 the trustees resigned themselves to being unable to use the new assessments. The faction which insisted that the trust was bound by the 1790 Act included four Unitarians, and it formed one of the nuclei of the party of reform in Banbury. It was not until 1840 that the accounts of the architect and builder were settled, and two further years elapsed before all the liabilities were met and the trust was wound up.(2)

(1) N. Cooper, op.cit., pp.65-69.

(2) N. Cooper, op.cit., pp.69-72; 77-78.

S. P. Cockerell's church was an austere preaching box. The chancel was small, square-ended and blocked-off by the east gallery, whose occupants had their backs to the altar. The walls and pillars were whitewashed, and the windows filled with frosted glass. Seats for the charity schoolchildren were in the gallery by the organ, and for the poor and the servants of the middle class there were 290 free sittings under the gallery, from which it was almost impossible to hear what was said at the reading desk or in the pulpit. Morning prayer was a civic as well as a religious ritual. During the mayoralty of John Golby Rusher in 1834-35 the corporation assembled at Rusher's house for wine and biscuits before processing to church where the mayor sat on a raised seat in the curtained corporation pew, facing the congregation.(1)

Thomas William Lancaster was Vicar of Banbury from 1815 to 1849, the longest incumbency in the history of the parish. He was born, the son of a clergyman, in 1787, and after taking his BA at Oriel, became Fellow of the Queen's College in 1812. On ordination as priest in the same year, he became curate at Banbury, and was preferred to the vicarage in 1815. About 1823 nervous disorder, and perhaps also his academic ambitions led him to leave the church in the charge of curates and to live in Oxford. Lancaster was a competent scholar who won some of the consolation prizes of the academic world, the chaplaincy to the Lord Mayor of London in 1828, and the Bampton Lectureship in 1831, but failed in spite of many sycophantic letters to gain the librarianship of the British Museum, or

(1) N. Cooper, op.cit., pp.67-69; BPL, PC VII, p.51; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.41.

the chair of classics at King's College, London. He augmented his income by publishing theological works, by tutoring in the university, and, in the 1840s, as under-master of Magdalen College School. His appearances in Banbury were sufficiently infrequent for a newspaper to refer in 1840 to 'that great stranger, the Vicar'.(1) Lancaster had a remarkable ability for making himself appear ridiculous. In the 1840s he still dressed in the high fashion of the days of his youth, in a tight black coat with pantaloons and knee-high Hessian boots adorned with tassels at the shins. In 1820 he was marooned in the Town Hall during an election riot. He climbed into the loft below the clock, then fell through the ceiling of the floor below, ending up bestriding a beam in mid-air. He shunned enthusiasm, yet he was fierce in controversy, and was removed from the list of preachers at the Queen's College for calling Renn Dickson Hampden 'that atrocious professor' during a University Sermon. Dr. Edward Burton, Regius Professor of Divinity, regarded him as 'a learned but odd man'.(2) Lancaster's long tenure of the freehold of a parish for which he was manifestly unsuited epitomised one of the principal weaknesses of the Established Church in the changing society of the early nineteenth century.

(1) E. R. C. Brinkworth, 'A Nineteenth Century Vicar of Banbury: Thomas William Lancaster', C & CH, II, 1, 1962, pp.57-60; OC & CC, 25 April 1840; Oxford Chronicle & Reading Gazette, 30 June 1849

(2) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1849, p.40; Sarah Beesley, op.cit., p.19; G. V. Cox, Recollections of Oxford, 1868, p.271; Shrewsbury School Library, Letters of Dr. Edward Burton, I, 174.

The resident curate of Banbury throughout the 1830s was John Richard Rushton, a zealous Evangelical, and a 'resolute opponent of ritualism'. When, in 1840, his parishioners presented him with a silver plate towards which 370 people had subscribed, speakers praised his concern for the old, the young and the sick. Within a fortnight in the summer of 1830 he presided over the annual meetings of the National Schools, the Visiting Charitable Society and the Auxiliary Bible Society, and preached on thrift to the friendly societies on Club Day.(1) A Sunday School was established in 1834. In 1838 he endeavoured to provide an evening service at St. Mary's.(2) Mass confirmations, a much-publicised activity in the Oxford diocese in the 1850s, were no novelty in Banbury. Five hundred were confirmed at St. Mary's in May 1840 and over 600 in August 1843.(3) The church choir, under Robert Edwards, organist until 1846, was a social institution of some consequence. In 1840, 1841 and 1842 festivals were organised to raise money for rebuilding of the organ. In 1841 Messiah was sung, and full cathedral services were performed.(4)

J. R. Rushton made no secret of his political allegiances. He told the Banbury Conservative Association in 1840 that 'he attended the meeting, not as their pastor ... but as a brother Conservative ... reading at all times to come forward in support of those Conservative principles which he felt proud

(1) BA, 3 Feb.1881; NH, 11 July 1840; NH 20 July 1839; NH 3 Aug.1839.

(2) OH, 9 Aug, 1834; OH, 27 Sep.1834; JOJ, 24 Nov.1838; OH, 24 Nov.1838; NH, 4 April 1840.

(3) OC & CC, 23 May 1840; NH, 5 Aug.1843; NH, 10 Oct.1846; BG, 8 Oct.1846.

(4) BrL,RC, pp.177-78,211,221; NH, 22 Jan.1842; NH 3 Sep.1842; N. Cooper, op.cit., p.72; OH, 26 Dec.1835.

to confess'. The following year he informed another Conservative meeting that in the eleven years he had been in Banbury, 'it had never occurred to him that he was acting inconsistently by aiding the good cause'.(1) The duty of upholding the Established Church against Dissent, Popery and infidelity was one of the foundations of political conservatism in Banbury. Conservatism could be combined with a desire for the reform of abuses. Alfred Beesley, poet and historian, who resigned from the Society of Friends in 1825 to join the Church of England, and later the Conservative Party, upheld the Establishment with all the vigour of a convert.(2) He had a romantic view of the Church, combining it with a love of the Gothic which led him to repudiate St. Mary's as architecture which was unChristian.(3) He had great respect for Rushton, of whom he wrote:

> 'May those sober days of temperate but sincere reform which we both hope are now about to beam upon the Church we love, present one of their chief benefits in the bringing together of such men as you to fill, alike in her proudest and humblest situations, the high duties and callings of her faithful ministers'.(4)

(1) NH, 15 Aug.1840; NH, 30 Oct.1841.

(2) ORO, BMM I/5, Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of the Banbury Society of Friends, 1824-32, 5 Dec.1825.

(3) A. Beesley, op.cit., p.555.

(4) Alfred Beesley, Japheth, Contemplation and Other Pieces, 1834, p.vi.

The Church of England in Banbury was strong because it could call upon loyalties which overlay divisions of party and social class. Many of the Reform Party in Banbury, the Muntons, Thomas Tims and the Braynes were churchmen. The Church was the most popular denomination amongst the religious poor. In Neithrop in 1850 nearly 40 per cent of those actively committed to a church were Anglicans, and the proportion was highest among the least skilled.(1) Early in the 1840s there were up to 240 communicants in Banbury, and as many as a thousand people attended some services.(2) The 1851 census reveals congregations at morning and evening services of about 1,300.(3) When Lancaster's successor claimed in 1854 that 'almost all the poor receive our ministrations and about half the other classes'(4) he was exaggerating, but the assertion that the Establishment enjoyed the support of many of the poor was valid.

Clergy from rural parishes considerably influenced the Church in Banbury. Local incumbents participated in the foundation of the Diocesan School, in the activities of the Church Missionary Society, the SPCK and the Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews.(5) They included arch-reactionaries

(1) Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966, p.116.

(2) Bod. Lib. MS Ox.Dioc.b.39.

(3) 1851 Ecclesiastical Census, see Table Five.

(4) E. P. Baker, ed., Bishop Wilberforce's Visitation Returns for the Archdeaconry of Oxford, 1854, 1954, pp.12-13.

(5) NH, 21 Mar.1840; BPL, RC pp.124,157,203,217,241-42,247, 250; BG, 16 Oct.1845.

like Francis Litchfield, Rector of Farthinghoe, and Liberals like John Jordon of Somerton, an Evangelical and a supporter of mechanics' institutes and museums. Whatever the attitudes of the clergy in Banbury on any issue, there were always local incumbents, some from the neighbouring dioceses of Lichfield and Peterborough, who took a contrary view. It was impossible for the Vicar of Banbury to enjoy the unchallenged authority of the incumbent of a rural parish for he faced not just the opposition of Dissent, but the constant exposure of the ambiguities of his own church.

Fear of the Church of Rome was a strong motivating force amongst Anglicans in Banbury. In December 1838, 700 attended a lecture on Popery by the Revd. John Jordan of Somerton, at which nearly £5 was collected for the Martyrs' Memorial in Oxford.(1) In the public excitment which followed the apostasy of John Henry Newman in 1845 the Banbury Protestant Institute was set up. It was a largely Anglican body which organised a programme of lectures in defence of the Church.(2) The proposal to build a second Anglican church in Banbury was conceived before 1840 primarily as a reaction against the Church of Rome. In 1850 members of the Establishment were urged:

> 'to give this substantial proof of your consistent and principled opposition to the Church of Rome ... while affording church accommodation to your poorer brethren, have the pleasing satisfaction of speedily raising a memorial of your opposition to Romish errors and

(1) JOJ, 15 Dec.1838.

(2) Bod.Lib. Oxon 8° 637 (16).

superstitions'.(1)

In December 1840, J. R. Rushton was preferred to the vicarage of Hook Norton and replaced by Thomas Mardon, who had the assistance of an evening lecturer, the Revd. J. Sanders, who was succeeded in 1845 by Charles Forbes who ultimately became vicar of the new parish of South Banbury. Samuel Wilberforce was appointed Bishop of Oxford in 1845 and quickly recognised 'the greatness of our needs in Banbury'.(2) In 1849 he arranged an exchange of livings between the aging Lancaster and William Wilson, an energetic priest of 27 years of age, who held his family's living at Worton.(3) Wilson was able to build on a solid foundation. The Church in Banbury in the 1830s and 40s exhibited numerous abuses, but it was neither thoroughly corrupt nor wholly ineffective.

The Presbyterians assembling at the Great Meeting were the aristocrats of Banbury's dissenters. The congregation had its origins in the ejection of the Puritan Samuel Wells from the vicarage in 1662. By 1716 meetings were held in a double-roofed chapel off the Horsefair. The congregation flourished in the eighteenth century under the leadership of the Cobb family, and during the pastorate of C. B. Hubbard between 1814 and 1845 Unitarian theology was gradually adopted. Members had been influenced by the writings of Joseph Priestley, and by the example of Joseph Jevans, the Presbyterian minister

(1) BG, 2 Jan.1840; Bod.Lib.Oxon 8° 637 (20).

(2) Bod.Lib.Dep.d.209,pp.70-71, Samuel Wilberforce - Charles Forbes, 11 July 1850.

(3) BG, 28 June 1849; Oxford Chronicle & Reading Gazette, 30 June, 1849; JCJ, 30 June 1849; OH, 30 June 1849.

at Bloxham.[1] In 1830 the Great Meeting included many of Banbury's trading and professional élite. Apart from the Cobb family, the trustees included James Wake Golby, the most influential solicitor in the town, William and Lyne Spurrett, and John Golby Milward, ironmongers, and William Potts, printer and publisher of the Banbury Guardian.[2] In 1843 Hubbard was succeeded by Henry Hunt Piper, father-in-law of Edward Cobb, and previously chaplain to the Shore family of Norton Hall near Sheffield.[3] In 1851 the congregation comprised between 100 and 150 adults,[4] only about six per cent of the worshippers in Banbury, but its influence far outweighed its lack of numbers. The Unitarian Sunday School, founded in 1802, was the oldest in Banbury, and gave the first elements of education to 'some of the first gentlemen of business' in the town.[5]

The Banbury Quaker Meeting also originated in the seventeenth century. It endured severe persecution during the Interregnum and in the post-Restoration period.[6] A new

(1) Amherst D. Tyssen, 'The Old Meeting House, Banbury', Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society, I, 1919,pp. 274-82,288-90; VCH, Oxon X, pp.112-12; Christian Reformer, 1854,pp.459-62.

(2) A. D. Tyssen, op.cit., pp.290-91.

(3) Ibid, p.290; The Inquirer, 30 Jan.1864.

(4) See Table Five.

(5) BA, 2 July 1863.

(6) VCH, Oxon, X, pp.109-10.

meeting house was erected in 1750, but during the second half of the century it was admitted that 'too many indulge themselves in a spirit of ease and indifference.'(1) There were signs of renewed vitality by the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 1829 the Quaker Evangelical, J. J. Gurney remarked of the Banbury meeting:

> 'In the country Friends are reduced and scattered. Here they are an increasing and very comfortable Society, & it has been pleasant to become acquainted with them. We seem to me to flourish better in the middle class than in those below them'.(2)

The banker Joseph Ashby Gillett became clerk of the meeting in 1830 and was acknowledged as a minister in 1841. Other Quakers included Samuel Beesley, a confectioner and one of the town's most active reformers, the Head family, woolstaplers and drapers, Jeremiah Cross, a grocer, and James Cadbury, uncle of the founders of Bournville and son-in-law of Joseph Sturge, who set up as a grocer in Banbury in 1840.(3) Banbury's principal Friends were in no sense a peculiar people, cut off by their beliefs from society at large.(4) There were some poor members who were occasionally relieved from the meeting's funds. Discipline was severe, and several Friends were excluded for marrying outside the Society, for bankruptcy and drunkenness. The meeting scrupulously observed the resolution

(1) ORO, BMM.I/41, Minutes of the Banbury Monthly Meeting, 5 April, 1756.

(2) Quoted in Elizabeth Isichei, Victorian Quakers, 1970, pp.178-79.

(3) ORO, BMM.I/6, Minutes of the Banbury Monthly Meeting 1833-45, 5 Feb.1840.

(4) E. Isichei, op.cit., pp.8-10.

of the national yearly meeting of 1834 that 'The best Recreation of a Christian is the relief of distress'.(1) Friends visited Banbury gaol, and Samuel Beesley died from an infection he contracted there.(2) In 1846 Martha, daughter of J. A. Gillett, was authorised to visit families in distress, and in 1849 to go to lodging houses, beerhouses and the cottages of the poor.(3) The meeting entertained American Quakers, and maintained links with members who had emigrated. It was attended in 1851 by about 60 people, less than two per cent of Banbury's worshippers, but its place in local society was measured by its influence rather than its numbers.

The Wesleyan Methodist society presented many contrasts with the Unitarians and Quakers. It was easily the largest Nonconformist church in Banbury, with about 17 per cent of the worshippers in the town, and a morning congregation of 558 on 30 March 1851, yet few of its members were active in public life.(4) Methodism arrived late in Banbury, the first society having been established no earlier than 1784 when

(1) Ibid, p.217.

(2) Samuel Beesley, Memoranda of Visits to the Borough Prison, MS, penes D. G. W. Brown of Sunderland.

(3) CRO, BMM.I/7, Minutes of the Banbury Monthly Meeting, 1845-55, 1 April 1846, 1 Aug.1849; (A.Ll.B.Thomas), J. Bevan Braithwaite: a Friend of the Nineteenth Century, 1909,pp.122-23.

(4) See Table Five.

John Wesley preached in the Presbyterian meeting house.(1) In 1791, when 'many of the common people were inclined to Methodism' a chapel was built in Calthorpe Lane. The congregation moved in April 1812 to a new building in Church Lane which cost over £2,000, much of which was not paid off for half a century. Further debts were incurred by extensions in 1818 and 1839-41, and financial embarrassment dominated the history of the society until the 1860s.(2) The Wesleyan society was the centre of a large circuit, through which Methodism was exported from the town to the countryside. Enthusiasm aroused at revivals such as that in 1821 was channelled into evangelism in the villages.(3) In the immediate vicinity of Banbury were cottage meetings at Grimsbury and Nethercote which served as nurseries for young local preachers.(4) Membership in the Banbury circuit (separate figures for the Banbury society are not available) rose from 565 in 1830 to 813 in 1836, and reached 870 in 1845. In 1847 the societies around Kineton were formed into a separate circuit with 270 members. The total in Banbury was then 561, which increased to 642 by 1851.(5)

(1) VCH, Oxon X, p.117; Barrie Trinder, The History of Methodism in Banbury, 1965, pp.7-8.

(2) Monthly Repository, 1823, quoted in A.S. Tyssen, op.cit., p.285; B.Trinder, History of Methodism in Banbury, pp.11-12; Bod. Lib.C644.126; Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury, Banbury Wesleyan Church Trust Minutes, 1813-44; Trust Accounts 1812-13 and 1819-49.

(3) Methodist Magazine, 1821, p.380; Thomas Champness, ed., A Memorial of Richard Edmunds of Banbury, n.d. circa 1895, pp.12-13, 26-27.

(4) Wesleyan Methodist Church, Grimsbury, Jubilee Souvenir 1871-1921, 1921, p.3; Northamptonshire Record Office, A register of meeting house certificates, 1813-52.

(5) Figures from Minutes of the Methodist Conference.

Wesleyans included men of all shades of political opinion. Richard Edmunds, Senior, an ironmonger and seedsman, had been a churchman, but on his conversion at about the age of 33 in 1827, he began to interject 'Hallelujahs' into the liturgy at St. Mary's, and was advised to join the Wesleyans.(1) As a member of the Old Corporation he voted for the Reform candidate in the 1831 election, although he was later a Conservative. He was active in the Bible Society, the anti-slavery movement and the British Schools. No other Wesleyan could match this level of public activity before 1850. Wesleyans tended to be upwardly mobile. John Walshaw, outrider to a tailor, became a grocer. John Kilby, a clerk in the office of Benjamin Aplin, subsequently set up as a solicitor on his own account. Charles Drury, clerk to a woolstapler became a surveyor. In 1850 the Wesleyans attracted fewer members of the middle class than the other Nonconformist denominations, but more of the poor and unskilled.(2)

Primitive Methodism appeared in Banbury as the result of missioning in 1835 by the Revd.Joseph Preston of Witney, who hoped to enlarge a pre-existing and isolated society at Chacombe. In 1836 the venture was renamed the 'Banbury Mission'. Services were held in a cottage in Newland until 1839 when a small chapel waserected behind two cottages in Broad Street, and a minister took up his station in the town.(3) The Banbury Primitive Methodist Circuit was formed in 1840 with 262 members, a total which increased to 689 within ten years, of

(1) T. Champness, op.cit., pp.8-9.

(2) Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966, pp.112-19.

(3) John Petty, A History of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, 1864, pp.319-20; BG, 24 April 1873.

whom about a hundred belonged to the Banbury society.(1) The enlargement of the chapel in 1847 increased the congregation, and there were 212 people, about seven per cent of the worshippers in the town, at the most numerously attended service on 30 March 1851.(2) The principal layman in the congregation was Richard Brazier, a whitesmith from Stourport, who moved to Banbury about 1837. He prided himself on being 'a working man' but by 1850 he had acquired some land from which he worked as a coal merchant and milkman. He was active in the temperance movement, and served as a Poor Law Guardian. The congregation was emphatically working class. Between 1842 and 1852, 42 children were baptised at the chapel. The fathers of 18 were labourers, and the rest included wheelwrights, shoemakers, weavers and boatmen.(3) The Primitives' more important meetings were held in Baptist or Independent chapels, and were often attended by ministers of those denominations, and by Wesleyans.

The remaining Protestant congregations in Banbury sprang from a single source, a series of Thursday evening meetings begun by 'a few serious people' in 1772-73, which were followed by Sunday evening meetings at the home of Thomas Ainge, a tailor and Baptist. About 1780 a meeting room was fitted up, and the congregation began to be visited by ministers of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. In 1792 a domed building seating 500 and called the New Chapel (perhaps to distinguish it from the Old Meeting) was erected in Church

(1) Primitive Methodist Magazine, 1848, pp.245-57; Ibid, 1849, p.243; Ibid, 1851, p.238.

(2) See Table Five.

(3) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; BA, 2 Feb.1882; Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury, Baptisms in the Melton (and later Banbury) Circuit of the Primitive Methodist Connexion, 1824 et seq.

Passage.(1) The congregation included Protestants of many kinds, Baptists, Independents, Antinominians, disciples of William Huntington the converted coal-heaver, and followers of the Countess of Huntingdon who used the Anglican liturgy. Minister followed minister in rapid succession, and members were continually excluded and re-admitted. About 1812 the link with Lady Huntingdon's Connexion was broken, and the Baptist elements began to hold separate meetings. In 1813 a new building was opened for 'the Friends of the Gospel separated from the Chapel in Church Passage', on property belonging to Richard Austin the brewer, on the west side of South Bar, which was licensed in 1815.(2) By 1816 the chapel was a distinctly Independent body, where Baptists and others attended on sufferance, the congregation being divided into 'members', 'members of other churches' and 'hearers only'.(3) In 1818 Thomas Searle was ordained at the start of an eight year ministry, the longest in the history of the church to that date.(4) In the same year a Baptist chapel was opened at Bodicote which attracted some Baptists from Church Passage. On the arrival

(1) PRO, RG 4, 2919,9440, Baptismal Registers; Banbury United Reformed Church, Minutes of Banbury Congregational Church 1869-79, copy of 'History of the Church up to his Knowledge by the Revd. Ingram Cobbin'.

(2) Evangelical Magazine, 1813, pp.430-31; Bod.Lib. C644.152.

(3) Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book for Banbury Independent Society, 1794 et seq.

(4) Evangelical Magazine, 1818, p.399.

of a new minister, Robert Radford, about 1822, the Bodicote congregation split, part meeting at the village chapel and part in Banbury, and for this latter group of Calvinists, Joseph Gardner, the ironmonger, built a chapel in West Bar in 1829, where Radford remained as minister until the early 1840s.(1) In 1834 Richard Austin built another chapel on the east side of South Bar to accommodate the Calvinistic Baptists who since 1813 had been meeting on the other side of the road. The congregation was served by regular ministers throughout the 1830s and 40s.(2)

In 1831 Caleb, son of the Revd. Richard Clarke of the Baptist church at Weston-by-Weedon in Northamptonshire, settled in Banbury as a hosier. He had unusual gifts for preaching and healing, and began to hold services in his own home. Those who assembled there formed one of the elements which made up the Particular Baptist church formed in 1840, which settled in a new classical chapel in Bridge Street the following year.(3) The congregation also included Baptists who had remained with the Church Passage chapel, some from Austin's congregation, and a few Banburians who previously attended village chapels.

(1) BG, 19 Oct.1876; VCH, Oxon IX, pp.40-41.

(2) Bod.Lib.C645.228; ORO 315, Austin Family Deeds, bundle I; OH, 29 Mar.1834.

(3) Baptist Magazine, 1841, pp.127,456,643; Bod.Lib.C646.115, 185; Banbury Baptist Church, Deed of Bridge Street Baptist Church, Banbury, 6 April 1841; John Taylor, The History of College Street Church, Northampton, 1897, p.92.

It was acknowledged that the building of the Bridge Street chapel was due to Clarke's influence, but he did not become its minister, and in 1846 he revived services in his own home.(1)

Thus by 1850 the meeting which began in 1772-73 had evolved into an Independent Church meeting in the New Chapel, two Calvinistic Baptist congregations meeting in the buildings erected by Gardner and Austin, the Particular Baptist Chapel in Bridge Street, and the meetings held in Clarke's house, Probably the Disciples of Christ, a group of schismatic Baptists founded in the United States by Alexander Campbell, and established in Banbury in 1840, sprang from the same source.(2)

The Baptists and Independents attracted about 15 per cent of the worshippers in Banbury in 1851.(3) They were drawn largely from the town's shopkeepers and skilled tradesmen, and included notable figures like Joseph Gardner, inventor of the Banbury turnip cutter, Richard Austin the brewer, and Richard Goffe, a master tailor who was five times mayor. Baptist and Independent dissent spread from the countryside into the town. Most of the leading members of the two denominations were immigrants to Banbury, many from villages where there were old-established dissenting congregations, although a significant proportion came from London.

(1) James Cadbury, A Tribute of Affection to the memory of the late Caleb Clarke of Banbury, 1851 (BPL, Case E1,p.2); Regents Park College Library, Oxford, W.T.Henderson, Recollections of his Life; BG, 27 Feb.1851; Bod.Lib. C647.40; BPL, PC VI, p.90.

(2) The Christian Messenger, New Series, III, 1847, pp.570-72.

(3) See Table Five.

The rebirth of Roman Catholicism in Banbury in the early nineteenth century was entirely a revival of the Roman faith among the native population, which owed nothing to Irish immigration. There were only 78 people of Irish birth in Banbury in 1851, less than one per cent of the population.(1) In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a Catholic presence in the district had been maintained by the Holman family of Warkworth Castle. There were some Catholics in Banbury by 1798 when a baptismal register was begun, and in 1802 an émigré French priest, Pierre Julien Hersent settled in High Street. In 1804 he returned to Warkworth, and after the demolition of the Castle in 1806 built a chapel in Overthorpe which served local Catholics until he started to hold meetings on private premises in Banbury. He was joined in 1830 by Fr. Joseph Fox, who took charge of the congregation after his death in 1833, and acquired land for a church. Fox died in 1835 by which time the crypt was vaulted and part of the walls erected.(2) The church of St. John was opened with much ceremony on 19 June 1838. A large crowd gathered before the opening service, and in a mad rush to enter the church several ladies were roughly pressed. Many of the congregation were curious Protestants, among them the Unitarian minister. The high standard of music was admired, but the sermon preached in the evening by the Hon. and Revd. G. Spencer, younger brother of Lord Althorpe was less well received. 'The meanest Methodist cordwainer could

(1) See Table Six.

(2) A. G. Wall, St. John's Church, Banbury, 1938, pp.11-13; OH, 10 Aug.1833; OH, 19 Dec.1835.

have done better' wrote a not wholly unsympathetic correspondent.(1) Dr. William Tandy who went to Banbury after Fox's death was responsible for completing the church. He had attended the English college in Rome, and knew Augustus Welby Pugin, who designed the sanctuary and the presbytery.(2) The church was regarded by Protestants with the same mixture of shocked horror and intense curiosity with which they would have contemplated a pornographic book. Churchmen were careful to call it a 'chapel', while to Quakers it was, in the revived language of their seventeenth century forebears, a 'mass-house'. In the autumn of 1838 Dr. Tandy engaged in pamphlet warfare with George Harris, a Baptist coal-dealer, who attacked image worship, transubstantiation, infallibility, the Latin mass and the veneration of the saints, and accused the Catholics of trying to seduce respectable Protestants with good voices to join their choir.(3) For a time almost every public gathering in Banbury became an occasion for the expression of opinions about Roman Catholics. A Wesleyan minister lecturing on popery objected to the presence of Catholic spies in his audience. On 5 November 1838 about 1,000 people marched with squibs and crackers to burn an effigy of Dr. Tandy. A few

(1) A.G. Wall, op.cit., p.19; BG, 7 June 1838; OC & CC, 23 June 1838; OH, 23 June 1838.

(2) A.G. Wall, op.cit., p.18; Joseph Gillow, A Biographical Dictionary of the English Catholics, n.d., V, p.537.

(3) OH, 23 June 1838; George Harris, The Spirit of Popery, 1838, Bod.Lib.Oxon 8° 637 (4).

days earlier one of the pinnacles of St. John's Church had blown down, it was said, because George Harris had prayed to Protestant St. Boreas.(1) The pinnacles or 'ears' were particularly offensive to Protestant sensibilities, and were reduced in size after they were found to be unsafe.(2) By 1851 Catholics numbered about seven per cent of the worshippers in Banbury, and there were 480 people at the most popular mass on Sunday 30 March.(3) A holy guild, in effect a friendly society was set up, a school opened, and a nunnery established.(4) The social composition of the congregation resembled closely that of other Nonconformist churches. In Neithrop there were about as many Catholics as Unitarians, Baptists or Independents. They included several wealthy people, among them the Perry family, who had large market gardens, H. A. Dalby, a timber merchant, and George Craddock, a leading shoemaker.(5) De facto Catholic emancipation had yet to be achieved in Banbury. Catholics were active in some local societies, and sided with other Nonconformists in some controversies, but they played no part in municipal affairs. The emergence of a Catholic community in the town was perhaps one of the principal stimuli towards

(1) OC & CC, 10 Nov.1838; OH, 6 Oct.1838; OH, 27 Oct. 1838; OH, 3 Nov.1838; OH, 10 Nov.1838; OH, 1 Dec.1838; OH, 8 Dec.1838.

(2) BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, p.52.

(3) 1851 Ecclesiastical Census, see Table Five.

(4) A. G. Wall, op.cit., pp.19-22.

(5) Catholics can be identified from Church Registers, and from A. G. Wall, op.cit., p.22.

religious toleration in Banbury. After the excitement of 1838 there were further occasions when anti-Catholic feelings were expressed, but in every case this was due to outside factors. While Catholics were fellow tradesmen it was difficult to harbour about them the fantasies and fears which could be entertained about Jesuits or hordes of drunken Irishmen.

Protestant Dissenters comprised about half the religious worshippers in Banbury in 1851, while the Established Church could only claim the allegiances of about 42 per cent. Antipathy between the two had grown during the previous two decades, most notably on the issue of church rates. The national campaign against the rate began in 1834. In 1836 the Banbury Dissenters asserted that they would only allow the rate to be approved at the Vestry Meeting if they were promised that they would not be called upon to pay. In 1839 a Calvinistic Baptist was elected to the chair of the Vestry Meeting. George Harris, the anti-Papist, proposed a motion to nullify the rate, and was seconded, ironically, by Dr. Tandy. The motion was carried, but at a subsequent poll the rate was adopted by 405 votes to 260. It was alleged that Quaker bankers and the Cobb family sustained the opponents of the rate, although James Wake Golby the Unitarian solicitor insisted that the issue was not one of church or dissent, and that the rate was an obligation of landownership which should be paid.(1) A group nicknamed the Banbury Thorogoods, after John Thorogood of Chelmsford, one of those imprisoned for opposing church

(1) BPL,RC, pp.34,146; OC & CC, 23 Mar.1839; OC & CC, 6 April 1839; BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, pp.7-8; NH, 20 April 1839.

rates, refused to pay.(1) Baptists, Quakers and Catholics suffered distress of their goods, but in 1840 there was only negligible support when a Baptist tailor and a Quaker shoemaker tried to nullify the rate.(2) In 1841 the property of four Baptists was seized when they refused to pay the rate, and at the vestry meeting 'Chartists, Baptists and others' tried to prevent the 'buzzing of the organ' by objecting to the rate. It was rumoured that Catholics had been ordered to cease their objections, and in 1842 and 1844 only Quakers refused to pay, For a decade the issue remained dormant.(3)

There were many issues on which the divisions of religious opinion in Banbury were far from clear-cut. Most practising Christians had an opinion on Temperance, but apart from Quakers and Primitive Methodists, no group was unanimous about it. Some Anglicans co-operated with Dissenters in philanthropic organisations, and in bodies like the British and Foreign Bible Society. While there were some tendencies towards religious toleration in the 1840s, there were other movements in the opposite direction. More societies became distinctively Anglican or Nonconformist, and clergy with intransigent temperaments came to occupy the town's pulpits. Religion for all but the very poor or the very rich was a means of self-identity, an aid to the absorption of newcomers into the town's

(1) C. Silvester Horne, A Popular History of the Free Churches, 1903, p.403; H. S. Skeats and C. S. Miall, A History of the Free Churches in England 1688-1891, 1891, p.486.

(2) BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, pp.62,72,90-91; NH, 25 April 1840.

(3) OC & CC, 3 April 1841; OC & CC, 24 April 1841; OC & CC 6 Aug.1842; NH, 24 April 1841; NH 27 April 1844; Northampton Mercury, 1 May 1841.

society, a way of easing social mobility, and one by which the class element in alms-giving could be disguised. Religion provided a series of vertical divisions within society which for many were as important as the horizontal divisions of social class.

Chapter Five.

The Politics of Reform 1830-1850.

> 'A strange spectacle has been presented to the reflecting mind in the history of the last eighteen months. A prosperous, happy and contented nation of money-getting people is converted in a twinkling into a community of restless, dissatisfied politicians'.(1)

The social and economic tensions of Banbury were reflected in the politics of the town between 1830 and 1880 with unusual clarity. There was a distinct clash of ideologies, between those who differed not only on national questions, the importance which they attached to the Church of England or the Corn Laws, but also over the function and responsibilities of the town, questions which revealed profoundly different concepts of the nature of English society. Throughout the period local politics were conducted in the shadow of the epic struggle for the Reform Bill. Liberals were proud that they were among the labourers 'engaged in the momentous task of accomplishing the nation's reform', and of their contribution to 'the overthrow of political corruption'.(2) A man's standing in politics was judged by his role in 1831-32. Like Agincourt, the Easter Rising or the seige of Troy, it was a perpetual point of reference, remembered with advantages by all who could recall their feats upon those memorable days.

The North family of Wroxton Abbey dominated the politics of Banbury throughout the eighteenth century. They regularly provided lavish dinners for the corporation, who before 1832

(1) NH, 19 Nov.1831.

(2) OH, 4 Jan.1833; OH, 7 Dec.1833.

elected the members for Banbury. Between 1770 and 1782 Banbury was represented in the Commons by the Prime Minister. The eldest daughter of Lord North's son, the third Earl of Guilford, married John Stuart, second Marquess of Bute, who made Wroxton his home, became High Sheriff of Banbury, and exercised the North influence in the town. In 1806 William Praed, chairman of the Grand Junction Canal Company was elected MP in opposition to the North candidate, and in 1820 there were riots during the election, but there were few signs between 1800 and 1830 of principled opposition to the North interest.(1)

The election of 1830 was the last in which the Wroxton influence was exercised successfully. Henry Villiers Stuart, nephew of the Marquess of Bute was returned unopposed, being greeted by the largest crowd which had ever assembled for a Banbury election.(2) In 1831 he voted against the Reform Bill on the grounds that his constituents opposed it. Popular feelings in Banbury were deeply aroused. On 22 April 1831, the day after parliament was dissolved, an address to the Corporation urging the return of a member pledged to support the Reform Bill was open for signature. It was reported on 30 April that 'a most disorderly feeling has manifested itself in sundry tumultuous acts'. Six of the corporation invited Timothy Rhodes Cobb and William Spurrett to find a Reform candidate. Others brought forward Colonel Henry Hely Hutchinson of Weston Hall, Northants., who had married the widow of F. S. N. Douglas, grandson of Lord North who had sat

(1) Alfred Beesley, The History of Banbury, 1841, pp.539-40; William Potts, A History of Banbury, 1958,p.204; VCH, Oxon X, p.90.
(2) JOJ, 7 Aug.1830.

for Banbury between 1812 and 1819. Cobb and Spurrett recommended John Easthope, a stockbroker.(1) A committee comprising Cobb, Spurrett, John Munton, Thomas Tims, Thomas Gardner and Samuel Beesley, four of whom were Dissenters, issued a bill on 28 April regretting that Hutchinson was standing, and urging the corporation not to vote for him. On election day, 2 May, North Bar was barricaded to keep out non-resident voters, and as a precaution against military intervention. The mayor, Thomas Brayne, was a Reformer, and on the advice of the deputy recorder, Andrew Amos, he decided that troops should not be brought in. Hutchinson stayed at Castle House, and when he emerged into Cornhill he was set upon by about a hundred people who jostled him as he fled under the protection of the parish constables towards the bridge. Attempts were made to duck him in the canal, but the Reformer Francis Francillon intervened and the crowd was satisfied with a token immersion of his hat. Hutchinson described the incident as part of a reign of terror. Two members of the corporation voted for Hutchinson, but six supported Easthope who was duly returned. He stopped his celebration procession outside Cobbs Bank, and told young men he had once worked there, and that by industry and probity they might rise in the social scale as he had.(2) The cause of Reform received almost universal support in Banbury in 1831. Five of the six members of the corporation who voted for Easthope were subsequently Conservatives, and Alfred Beesley later recalled that 'almost every Conservative in the place supported the Reform Bill'.

(1) JCJ 7 May 1831; BC 14 Dec.1965.

(2) A. Beesley, op.cit., p.545; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.37; JCJ, 30 April 1831; JOJ, 7 May 1831; JOJ, 14 May 1831; JOJ, 21 May 1831; BG 11 June 1891.

Liberals claimed that 'the moral and intellectual power of the town' had been raised against the Wroxton interests.(1) The election was interpreted as a victory of national significance:

> 'Thus has a triumph been gained which will create a sensation throughout the kingdom. It proves that the spirit of reform is so fully aroused that the borough patrons may be defeated in their strongest holds'.(2)

There was a sense of relief that aristocratic rule was ending:

> 'No more they'll enjoy
> Their old corporate dinners,
> And guttle, and guzzle,
> And quarrel, poor sinners;
>
> No more haughty nobles
> will ride on our backs,
> To whip us and spur us
> And work us like hacks.(3)

Nevertheless the Reformers laid much stress on the King's support of the Reform Bill. 'Proud faction', claimed one handbill, 'and her Rebel crew, insult their Sovereign and bid defiance to his power. The people in justice will then defend his cause'. The alternative to Reform, claimed its proponents, was despotism and an end of liberty of the press. Anti-reformers forecast threats to property and the Corn Laws.(4)

The campaign of 1831 took place four months after the machine-breaking riots of 1830 when the yeomanry fought against stone-throwing farmworkers and townsmen who carried an effigy of

(1) BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, pp.128-30; BPL, PC II, p.53.

(2) CH, 7 May 1831.

(3) BPL, PC I, p.6.

(4) Ibid, p.72.

Villiers Stuart, MP.[1] At the Lent assizes thirteen Banburians had been charged with rioting, nine of them gaining acquittals.[2] Reformers were concerned to avoid disorder which might provide an excuse for troops to intervene. 'Soldiers cannot make a bad cause a good one' asserted one poater.[3] A decade later Liberals were still justifying the blockading of the town:

> 'the barricades were raised, not for the purpose of attack, but of defence against an armed force, unconstitutionally, because uncalled for by authority, hovering around the town on an election day; barricades, which it required only one word from a chief magistrate in whose courage, talent and integrity the People had confidence, to cause to be removed by the people themselves'.[4]

The townspeople were urged to acquiesce should an MP be elected contrary to the wishes of the majority, because it would ultimately do much for the cause of Reform.[5] Samuel Beesley wrote to a friend on the evening of election day with some relief, that 'peace was completely restored, and there is no cause to apprehend any further break in it'.[6] Among the supporters of the Wroxton interest there was resentment that 'might in the case proved stronger than right'.[7]

(1) Pamela Horn, 'Banbury and the Riots of 1831', C & CH, III, 9, 1967, pp.176-77.

(2) BPL, Hurst Collection, f.139.

(3) BPL, PC I, p.12.

(4) BPL, PC V, p.19.

(5) BPL, PC I, p.10.

(6) BPL, Case B. f.28a.

(7) SarahBeesley, op.cit., p.37.

There was much bitterness in the aftermath of the Reformers' victory. In September 1831 Thomas Brayne resigned as mayor and alderman, complaining of 'much notorious abuse and imbecility in the management of the local jurisdiction'. Andrew Amos was dismissed by the Bute family as deputy recorder. The Marquess of Bute was hissed and stoned in Banbury at the end of October, and declared that he would no longer reside at Wroxton.(1)

The second reading of the Reform Bill in the Lords on 14 April 1832 was greeted in Banbury by the bells of the parish church, but when the government was defeated in committee on 7 May there was talk in the town of an appeal to arms. When Earl Grey returned to office a union jack was hoisted on the church tower amid the firing of small arms which remained until the bill became law.(2) The Royal Assent was given on 7 June, and on 13 July the Reformers celebrated with a public procession in which the trade companies escorted the 'Champion of Reform', in white armour on a charger.(3) They also faced a general election, and consequently a crisis. For some time previously John Easthope had intended to retire as member for Banbury, but the Reformers had not tried to find another candidate.(4) The Conservatives

(1) JOJ, 17 Sep.1831; JOJ, 22 Oct.1831; JOJ, 12 Nov.1831; JOJ 3 Dec.1831; OH, 9 Sep.1831; OH, 22 Oct.1831; OH, 5 Nov.1831; OH, 21 Jan.1832.

(2) OH, 26 May 1832; OH, 12 Feb.1842; OC & CC, 12 Feb.1842; BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, pp.127-30.

(3) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949, facing p.116.

(4) BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832), 2, W. Spurrett's Instruction to J.Munton & T.R.Cobb, 9 June 1832; Ibid, 3, T.R.Cobb - W.Spurrett, 10 June 1832; OH, 16 June 1832; BPL, PC II, pp.8,96.

learned of his retirement, and on 8 June Benjamin Aplin, agent to Bute, visited Henry Pye, the recently-arrived tenant of Chacombe Priory, taking the promise of Bute's support should he contest Banbury, and the Marquess's approval of his campaigning as a Reformer. The following day Pye issued a manifesto full of Reforming promises. The Reform Party hurriedly asserted that Easthope had not resigned, and that if he did 'a gentleman of high character and known and tried principles' would be put forward'.(1) The same day T. R. Cobb and John Munton hastened to London with instructions to persuade Easthope to stand or to secure 'some gentleman whose name is eminent and his Whig politics notorious'.(2)

'Getting through business with the great men in the Whig interest in awkward', wrote Cobb to William Spurrett on 16 June, 'I shall be very glad to see a neighbour's face'. He suspected Lord Althorpe of trading Banbury for the Northamptonshire county seat, and complained that 'the lukewarmness and villainy connected with Politics is almost incredible'.(3) In Banbury the unity which had prevailed in 1831 had been dissipated. The Reformers were attacked as 'a self-appointed and secret committee of disunited dissenters'. Conservative allegations that Cobbs Bank used Easthope's MP's franks to send money to London were proving wounding.(4) On Thursday 14 June William Spurrett instructed

(1) BPL, PC II, p.4.

(2) BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832),2, W. Spurrett's Instructions to J. Munton & T. R. Cobb, 9 June 1832.

(3) Ibid, 29, T. R. Cobb - W. Spurrett, 16 June 1832; Ibid, 21 T. R. Cobb - W. Spurrett, 15 June 1832.

(4) BPL, PC, II, pp.8,11,58; BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832),5, Lyne Spurrett - T. R. Cobb, 11 June 1832.

Cobb to go to Oxford with a new candidate by the following Sunday. This proved impossible, but Joseph Parkes, the most effective of parliamentary brokers, arranged an introduction on Sunday 17 June to Henry William Tancred, a barrister, son of a Yorkshire baronet, and author of a pamphlet on parliamentary representation. On 18 June, Cobb, Munton and Tancred left London to spend the night at Oxford.(1) The same evening the first public meeting of the Banbury Reform Association took place. A committee of 30 was formed, which the following morning heard letters from Cobb and Munton recommending Tancred, and listing notable Whigs who supported him. Cobb, Munton and Tancred had already moved to the Fox at North Aston, about eight miles from Banbury, whence they were summoned to appear at a meeting in the Market Place that evening. The committee formally adopted Tancred the following morning.(2) They had feared the candidature of an extremist backed by the Birmingham Political Union.(3)

The election campaign of 1832 lasted from early June until mid-December. The Reformers knew nothing of electioneering and

(1) BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832),18, W.Spurrett-T.R. Cobb,14 June 1832; Ibid, 28, W.Spurrett-T.R.Cobb,16 June 1832; Ibid, 31, Joseph Parkes T.R.Cobb,17 June 1832; Ibid, 36,T.R.Cobb-W.Spurrett, 18 June 1832; H.W.Tancred, A Legal Review of the origin of the System of Representation in England, and of its present state, with observations on the Reform Necessary, 1831; for Parkes see N. Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, 1953; pp.418, seq.

(2) ORO 315, Box 13, BRA Mins.; BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832),34, W. Spurrett - T.R.Cobb, 18 June 1832; Ibid, 37, W. Spurrett - T.R. Cobb, 18 June 1832; OH, 30 June 1832.

(3) BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832),26,T.R.Cobb-Lord Althorpe,15 June 1832.

the Conservatives had experience only of a very different system. The Tories still controlled the local administration, and obstructed Reformers who tried to find out who might qualify for the franchise. The Reform Act enlarged the constituency to include the whole parish of Banbury, and candidates were escorted through the hamlets by supporters who had influence there.(1) The Conservatives sought to show that Pye was the better reformer of the two candidates, and that the Reform Committee were discredited and prone to extremism.(2) The Reformers sought to connect Pye with Lord Bute. A poster commented wryly that 'The Reform Bill has produced more conversions than the greatest saint in the Roman Calendar'.(3) Superficially Pye was an attractive candidate, 'independent of the party which has enjoyed the honours and advantages of office and of that which seeks them.'(4) His supporters suggested that his election would sooth the wounds caused by party faction: 'the storm which has so long agitated our borough ... has greatly interrupted those feelings which as neighbours and Christians it should be our duty to maintain'.(5) He posed as the friend of the poor and his charity towards the disadvantaged of Chacombe was frequently

(1) ORO 315, Box 13, BRA Mins., 22 June, 16 July 1832.

(2) Ibid, 15 Aug.1832; NH, 25 Aug.1832; BPL, PC II, pp.71-83.

(3) BPL, PC, II, pp.5,15,22,45,61,116; BPL, Pol.Corres.(1832), 14, W.Spurrett-T.R.Cobb, 13 June 1832.

(4) BPL, PC II, p.107.

(5) Ibid, p.15.

cited.(1) He alleged that Tancred was an untried man of no reputation whose employment as a boundary commissioner made him a placeman.(2) Tancred equivocated about Slavery, on which it was acknowledged that there was an unusually intense interest in Banbury, while Pye espoused the cause of immediate abolition. Tancred met members of the Banbury Anti-Slavery Society after which he defined 'immediate and total abolition' to mean the fixing of a time limit to the continuance of slavery.(3) The Conservatives emphasised that Tancred was the creature of a clique, the nominee of Cobb, Golby and Co.:

'Although he walks in silk attire
The COB webs are about him spread'.(4)

The Conservatives made a tactical error by publicising an endorsement of Pye's candidature by Thomas Attwood between 3 and 14 September. On 13 September the Reformers proved that Attwood was unacquainted with Pye and that he had written in the belief that there was no other Reform candidate.(5) The Reformers' tactics were defensive. They could not claim, as in 1831, that they were moving with the spirit of the times. They had to stand and fight on the ground which they had won in 1831. With some effect they sniped at Pye, suggesting that his much

(1) Ibid, pp.1,6,13,64-65,82,93.
(2) Ibid, pp.15,37-38,48,50-51.
(3) Ibid, pp.47,65,86.
(4) Ibid, pp.48,60.
(5) Ibid, pp.90,96,107.

lauded expenditure on charity was insignificant, that he was not a resident country gentleman, but one 'who comes like an owl and takes lodgings in an old mansion ... whom nobody knows anything of'. They reiterated Pye's past record on Reform, and his links with Conservative lawyers and the Marquess of Bute.(1)

Conservatives argued that Banburians should follow their economic interests rather than their ideological predilections, that it was in the interest of the town to accept the legitimate patronage of the landed classes. Banbury, it was maintained, was sustained by farmers, whom Pye, as a landed proprietor, would be bound to support.(2) After the Reform Act, it was suggested:

> 'all the large, newly-enfranchised towns will be careful to send to Parliament men versed in all the interests and bearings of Trade and Manufactures, which will actually predominate. Men of Banbury, it now behoves you to look well to your own interests in selecting a man able to advocate and watch over the interests of Agriculture ... for by such interests does Banbury flourish'.(3)

Another Conservative argued:

> '... Banbury is solely dependent on Agriculture and its ramifications for every shilling we possess ... Our duty and interests alike teach us to support Agriculture as pointedly as if we individually held the Plough. Manufacturers will be acute enough to send men to Parliament to advocate their interests; let us with becoming care defend our own'.(4)

(1) Ibid, pp. 42,57,107.

(2) Ibid, p.15.

(3) Ibid, p.87.

(4) Ibid, p.111.

The Reformers defended their ground ruggedly, occasionally allowing the Conservatives, as in the Attwood incident, to advance into perilous salients. They did not reject the premiss that the town was dependent on Agriculture, but utterly denied that it owed any kind of fealty to the landed interest. The campaign was one of attrition. The main incidents were the rumours and denials of Tancred's retirement in August, the claim by Pye that he had Attwood's support, and a riot during a dinner held by Pye's supporters at the Flying Horse on 25 September. A gang of youths shouted 'No Pye' as the candidate arrived to deliver his first public speech since the beginning of the campaign. The inn was stormed and the landlord alleged that several inhabitants attacked the house with the intention of destroying it, a capital charge which was subsequently dropped, although lesser charges were preferred.(1) Ultimately the Reformers won their defensive battle. As the campaign progressed and it became clear who would comprise the electorate, it was realised that the Reformers would have a majority. On the eve of nomination day, 10 December 1832, Pye's agent announced his retirement, and the next day Tancred was returned unopposed.(2)

In the years after the Reformers' victory there was increasing polarisation in public affairs. At the Oxford Lent Assizes in 1833 six of the rioters were tried, found guilty and given short terms of imprisonment. Liberals insisted that innocent men had been charged in an 'odious prosecution which

(1) NH, 9 March 1833; OC & CC, 5 Sep.1842.

(2) ORO 315, Box 13, BRA Mins.10 Dec.1832; BPL,PC II, p.125.

will never be thoroughly forgotten during the lifetime of the present inhabitants'. Support for James Hill, one of those imprisoned, was shown by electing him a churchwarden, but the archdeacon declared the election void. The prisoners were subsequently granted pardons by the Home Office.(1) Party conflicts dominated vestry meetings. Dissenters tried in 1834 to prevent the levying of a rate for an extension to the parish churchyard, and in 1833 the new democratic spirit in Banbury was recognised by a decision to toll the same bell at funerals of rich and poor.(2) The establishment of the Banbury Poor Law Union was also the occasion for party dispute. Townsmen objected to agricultural Guardians participating in the management of the poor of Banbury. The first meeting of the Board of Guardians was held on 6 April 1835. Banbury was represented by the Liberals, William Potts, Lyne Spurrett and Timothy Rhodes Cobb, but they were overwhelmed by Conservatives from the rural parishes.(3) The auditor and clerk were both Tory solicitors, elected after intensive canvassing, and even the post of relieving officer was fiercely contested.(4) In December 1835 an assistant rate collector was appointed for the borough, a publican being elected against the opposition

(1) NH, 9 Mar.1833; NH, 20 April 1833; OH, 9 Mar.1833;OH,20 April 1833.

(2) NH, 12 April 1834; NH, 23 Aug.1834; OH, 20 April 1833.

(3) BPL Minutes of the Banbury Board of Guardians, 1835-36, passim; PRO, MH 12/9577, Edward Gulson - Poor Law Commission, 9 Mar.1835.

(4) NH, 11 April 1835.

of an old retainer of the Cobb family. 'Mr. Cobb is not quite the man out of Banbury that he is in it' commented the Northampton Herald.(1)

Party spirit also affected the corporation. The Reformers provided information for the commissioners enquiring into municipal corporations in 1833 and petitioned for reform during the parliamentary discussions of the Municipal Corporations Bill in 1835. Conservatives argued that Liberals abstained from the Corporation's affairs by choice.(2) The first election after the Municipal Corporations Act took place on 26 December 1835, when all twelve of the councillors elected were 'opponents of the former system'. After the elevation of four councillors to the aldermanic bench a by-election was held on 8 January 1836, when three of the four successful candidates were Reformers.(3) The Northampton Herald observed that the noble and illustrious family which once influenced Banbury had been exchanged for the Cobbs, a vulgar, mean-minded family, which governed it, and showed that all twelve of the original councillors had links with Cobbs Bank and J. W. Golby the solicitor. A meeting was held at the Theatre to endorse the Reformers' candidates. The lowest number of votes cast for one of the chosen candidates was 136, while the highest polled by any other candidate was eleven. It is evident that the Conservatives abstained from the election.(4) Town council elections

(1) NH, 26 Dec.1835; PRO, MH 12/9577, passim.

(2) Alfred Beesley, The History of Banbury, 1841,pp.546-48;OH, 2 Feb.1833; OH,26 Oct.1833; OH,9 Nov.1833; NH,15 Aug.1835.

(3) A. Beesley, op.cit., pp.548; BPL, RC p.26.

(4) NH, 2 Jan.1836; OH, 26 Dec.1835; OH,2 Jan.1836.

continued to be a Liberal monopoly. Only 70 burgesses voted in the contest of 1836. In 1839 a newspaper reported apathy over the elections, and said the Tories were refusing to take part. Chartist intervention in 1841 failed to make the election lively, and in 1842 it was called an annual farce.(1) In 1847 the Conservative Association put forward John Drinkwater and James Danby, 'to attract the votes of those who think that the town council should not be composed exclusively of one party'. They received Chartist support and topped the poll, and succeeded again the following year.(2) In 1849 the Conservatives and Liberals each proposed two candidates who were returned unopposed.(3) The period of one-party rule on the corporation was over, but Liberal domination in the years after Municipal Reform had symbolised a dramatic shift of political power.

The unreformed corporation of Banbury was not especially corrupt, but it was subservient to the North and Bute families and symbolised an unpopular ancien régime.(4) Dramatic changes followed its takeover by the Reformers. The most important tasks of the new corporation were the recovery of its own Quarter Sessions and Court of Record, and the administration

(1) OC & CC, 9 Nov.1839; NH, 9 Nov.1839; NH, 6 Nov.1841; JOJ, 5 Nov.1842; BPL, RC pp.200,202.

(2) BG, 18 Nov.1847; BPL,RC p.252; Bod.Lib.G A Oxon.8° 993; BG, 2 Nov.1848; BPL, PC VI, pp.64,73-74.

(3) BG, 8 Nov.1849; BPL, PC VI, pp.78-80.

(4) VCH, Oxon X, p.76; BPP, Report of the Royal Commission on Municipal Corporations, (HC.116),1835, XXIII, pp.9-15.

of the borough's inadequate gaol.(1) A variety of superficial changes symbolised the shift of political power. The names of the streets were altered, and displayed on large signs. It was rumoured that St. John's Street had been renamed South Bar because Quakers objected to the old name.(2) Corporation attendance at St. Mary's Church ceased, and the corporation pew was 'sheep-penned into two and hired out for profit'.(3) The new council refused until 1850 to make an appointment to the post of High Steward.(4) A police force was established, which critics complained provided places for dependents of the Cobbs.(5) Two Conservative magistrates were excluded from the Bench and replaced by three Liberals. One Tory, Henry Tawney, remained a justice, but he was an ineffective speaker, and by 1840 was too ill to carry out his duties. In 1842 after the formation of Peel's Conservative government, the two Conservatives were reinstated,(6) but Liberal control of the Bench between 1836 and 1842 was a potent symbol of the change in political power.

(1) VCH, Oxon, X, pp.79-81.

(2) NH, 26 March 1836.

(3) BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, p.101.

(4) William Potts, A History of Banbury, 1958, p.214.

(5) NH, 13 Feb.1836; NH, 26 Mar.1836; NH, 24 Dec.1836; NH 6 May 1837.

(6) NH, 12 Feb.1842; OC & CC, 22 Jan.1842; OH,29 Jan.1842; OH 12 Mar.1842; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.47.

The new town council adopted an attitude of condescending moral superiority towards its predecessors. Shortly before Municipal Reform the old corporation sold their silver maces and bowls. Reformers alleged for many years that this was done to pay tavern debts.(1) In 1842 it was claimed that under the new corporation 'none of the Bridge or Charity money has been spent on food and drink', and that no political influence was shown in the choice of contractors, the bridge having been repaired by a Tory.(2) In 1846 it was asserted that the new corporation did not 'eat and drink at the expense of the borough funds, the bridge money is laid on the bridge and not in swill'.(3) The magistrates re-appointed in 1842 were alleged to be those 'under whom the town was as notorious for disorder as for its quietness and order in late years'.(4)

The first parliamentary contest in Banbury after the Reform Act was in the general election in the first week of 1835. The only opposition to Tancred came from a Birmingham Conservative, Edward Lloyd Williams, who posed as 'a sincere reformer', accepting the Reform Act, and the need to relieve Dissenters of Church Rates.(5) Conservatives warned against him as the associate 'of notorious whigs and radicals', and Birmingham Reformers provided evidence that he was a Tory. Williams limply claimed that he kept aloof from party politics and openly offered to the poor tickets for coal, tea, sugar and

(1) BG, 28 Oct.1852; VCH, Oxon X, p.88.

(2) OC & CC, 12 Nov.1842.

(3) BG, 12 Feb.1846.

(4) OC & CC, 22 Jan.1842.

(5) BPL, PC III, pp.5, 10.

currants.(1) After an ill-tempered performance on the hustings which 'disgusted his staunchest friends' he gained only 43 votes against Tancred's 203. The Morning Chronicle concluded that the Banbury Reformers had slain 'a wolf in sheep's clothing'.(2)

In the election which followed the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 Tancred was opposed by Henry Tawney, the banker, who was described as 'an influential inhabitant and a magistrate, with every prospect of success'. He canvassed timorously, and seems to have regarded his candidature as an unpleasant duty thrust upon him.(3) At the nomination he was heard attentively 'in consideration of his nervous feelings', but his speech was punctuated by guffaws of laughter, and he soon put on his hat and retired.(4) A second Liberal candidate, who did not go to the poll, was Francis Pigott, a lawyer who had family connections with Banbury.(5) With a poster headed 'Radical Charity' the Conservatives attacked the new Poor Law, pointing out that at the Bastille Union men and women were separated, poverty was treated as a crime, and relief was granted only on condition of perpetual imprisonment. Tancred's vote against the immediate abolition of flogging in the army was publicised and Tawney's nomination procession included a cart on which was a man being flogged. The Reformers reminded electors that Tories were responsible for the local administration of the Poor Law, and prevented workhouse inmates from attending

(1) BPL, PC III, pp.18,24,26.

(2) NH, 10 Jan.1835; BPL, PC III, p.40.

(3) OC & CC, 8 July 1837; NH, 8 July 1837.

(4) OC & CC, 29 July 1837.

(5) OC & CC, 15 July 1837; BPL, PC IV, p.10.

their own places of worship.(1) They alleged Tory links with Ernest, Duke of Cumberland, King of Hanover, Victoria's uncle and her supposed rival for the throne:

'On then to the battlefield!
The sword for Queen Victoria yield!
Never! Never! will we yield!
Make the base ones flee.

Lay the proud King Ernest low!
Lyndhursts fall in every foe!
Peel bends beneath each freeman's blow!
Let us do or die.(2)

There was disorder both at the nomination and on polling day. Tawney, it was suggested, was supported by 'a hired mob of wharfmen and boatmen', 'young farmers who seemed to have learned their manners from some of the quadrupeds in which they deal', prostitutes from Waterloo, and girls from the Church Sunday School, wearing bonnets paid for by public subscription, but trimmed with purple Tory favours. Tancred won by 181 votes to 75. After the declaration, Francis Litchfield, rector of Farthinghoe tried to prevent the traditional chairing of the member.(3) Both parties had founded short-lived registration associations in 1835, and both responded to the result by re-forming them.(4)

Banbury Borough Conservative Association was founded on

(1) OC & CC, 22 July,1837; OC & CC, 29 July 1837; BPL, PC IV, pp.4,21-22.

(2) OC & CC, 29 July 1837; BPL, PC IV, p.25.

(3) OC & CC, 29 July 1837; OC & CC, 10 Sep.1837; BPL, PC IV,p.31.

(4) OH, 11 July 1835; OH, 9 Sep.1837.

21 August 1837, a month after the election. Its principles were defined in a handbill:

> 'A True Conservative is fixed in his determination to preserve and add to the happiness of all, to preserve those Civil and Religious Institutions which have exalted us as a nation, to preserve the Constitution, with its limited Monarchy, to honour the Queen, to respect the Peers, and protect the People. If the Monarch needs support, the Conservative is to be found at the footsteps of the throne, if the Peers are threatened, they find him their supporter, if the Church is in danger, he flies to its rescue, but above all, if the liberties of the people are to be attacked, he is on foot in their ranks, ready to fight hand in hand in their defence'.

All who professed the Gospel were invited, 'to take all measures ... for upholding the civil and religious principles secured to us as Protestants at the Revolution in 1688'. A separate Protestant Conservative Association with identically stated principles was formed at the same time.(1)

Less than three weeks later a Reform Association was formed and accepted a declaration of principles:

> '... when the most strenuous efforts are being made in this borough as well as generally throughout the country, to regain for Toryism that ascendancy which has in former years cost this country so many millions of treasure, and has consequently entailed upon it a debts, the mere interest of which presses, more particularly upon the

(1) OC & CC, 26 August.1837; BPL, RC p.118.

> industrious classes with almost paralysing weight; the members of the Banbury Reform Association feel that it behoves every man desirous of diminishing that burden or even of preventing its increase, and who wishes to obtain for every class of Her Majesty's subjects equal rights and privileges, to exert himself in order to prevent that ascendancy being regained'.(1)

The objectives of the Banbury Liberals were to protect and enlarge upon the concept of 'Civil and Religious Liberty' which was always toasted at their dinners. In 1847 Timothy Rhodes Cobb proclaimed that 'For twenty years some of us have been engaged in endeavouring to carry out what we believed to be for the interests of the People' and cited a catalogue of beneficial changes, culminating in the repeal of the Corn Laws.(2) The Reform Association was led by some of Banbury's wealthiest citizens. It was a bourgeois but also a radical body. Like the Anti-Corn Law League it defined its position in class terms, both in relation to the aristocracy, who had betrayed their trust, and to the proletariat, for whose interests it felt responsible. In 1837 the Association resolved:

> 'That the Upper Classes thus losing the love and respect of the people ... the Nation is less able to resist its common enemies, and if freedom of election be not obtained, the constitution of our beloved country will be endangered and perhaps destroyed'.

(1) BPL, RC, p.118; ORO 315, Box 16, BRA Mins.1837-39.

(2) BG, 25 Feb.1847.

In a petition against the Corn Laws in 1839 the Association declared that its members:

> 'cannot close their ears to the numerous complaints of the working class of the privations endured by them, in consequence of the high price of bread; or to the demands of the manufacturers for an enquiry into the causes of the increasing advantages, which, they allege, foreign nations are annual gaining over this country as a commercial community; your petitioners, considering that the success of Agriculture is promoted by the prosperity of Trade ... While to the landlord, Manufacturer or Tradesman, or the master employing the poor, the price of bread for his Family is of but little moment as part of his general expenditure, to the Labouring Classes it is comparatively a question of starvation, half or more of their income being often expended in Bread alone'.(1)

The Reformers hoped to further their objectives by extending the franchise by legislation or registration. In 1845 Francis Francillon praised efforts to register the occupiers of new houses worth between £10 and £15 p.a., most of whom were dependent upon their own industry, and 'deeply interested in good and economical government'.The following year he urged the enfranchisement of the £5 householder, because independence increased the further you went down the social scale.(2) 'Independence' was second only to 'civil and religious liberty' as an epitome of Liberal thinking. It implied the independence of the citizen from fealty to an aristocratic landlord, and

(1) ORO 315, Box 16, BRA Mins. 1837-39, 24 Nov.1837, 15 Feb.1839.

(2) BG, 27 Feb.1845; BG, 26 Feb.1846.

the independence of the town from obligations to the gentry. In 1837 the Association called for 'protection against the menaces, undue influence and tyranny of men of power'.(1) Reformers often depicted Banbury as a star of enlightenment in a dark Tory sky. In 1841 Tancred referred to the town as 'a cradle of liberty, a little island, an oasis of freedom in a waste, howling wilderness of Toryism'.(2) The Reformers were proud that their achievements owed nothing to friendly aristocrats, proclaiming in 1846, 'We, without a Whig squire, or a Whig parson, and surrounded by Tories, have beaten Toryism'.(3)

Conservatives considered that the interests of the market town were identical with those of the countryside, and that consequently the townsmen owed the Agricultural Interest their political support. Aristocratic patronage was accepted as part of the natural social and economic order. In 1844 the draper R. T. Haynes stated:

> 'the aristocracy did not want of them a slavish bowing down to the ground, but they did expect that becoming and respectful treatment, which, as Banbury tradesmen, they owed to that class of society. They should be proud to have so many gentlemen engaged in the cultivation of their estates in the neighbourhood ... They ought to do what they could for the prosperity of the town, and they should unite together to return to Parliament some highly influential neighbour'.(4)

(1) ORO 315, Box 16, BRA Mins.1837-39, 24 Nov.1837.

(2) OC & CC, 3 July 1841.

(3) BG, 9 Mar. 1848.

(4) BG, 12 Dec.1844; NH, 14 Dec.1844.

Francis Litchfield said in 1846 that:

> 'when he walked through Banbury and saw so many splendid houses erected, and how many large and small fortunes had been made, and all by means of the money received from the neighbouring agriculturalists, he could not bring himself to believe that in Banbury the destruction of Agriculture could be desired, still less promoted'.(1)

Aristocrats and farmers did not always reciprocate such sentiments. A Conservative complained in 1844:

> 'there are in this borough a bold and valiant set of Conservatives who ought to be supported, and the only reason they are not successful is because they are not supported by the neighbourhood as they ought to be'.(2)

The Banbury Conservatives were regarded by the landed classes in rather the same way that the Red Army looked upon the leaders of the rising in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1944. The Conservatives complained that aristocrats did not mix socially in the town with those who shared their political opinions, and that rural Conservatives inconsiderately patronised Liberals, particularly Cobbs Bank and the solicitors Golby, Munton and Draper.(3)

'The party is strongest in point of fact', wrote Sir Robert Peel, 'which has the existing registration in its favour'.(4) When the Reform Association was formed in 1837 its committee was instructed 'to secure the registration of every entitled Liberal and prevent Tories with no right from registering', and

(1) NH, 14 Feb.1846.

(2) NH, 14 Dec.1844.

(3) BG, 30 Nov.1848; NH, 8 July 1837; NH, 30 Sep.1837; NH, 9 Dec.1837; OC & CC, 12 Aug.1837.

(4) Quoted in Norman Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel, 1953,p.118.

the practical basis of Liberal superiority in Banbury was meticulous attention to the register. In most years the Association was represented at the registration court by Francis Francillon, who rarely failed at Association dinners to commend Banbury's 'pure register'. Reformers were sometimes reminded of the need to ensure the election of 'proper persons' as overseers to ensure fairness in compiling the register.(1)

The division between Reformers and Conservatives was one within Banbury's respectable middle class. During the late 1830s the organised working class became an important factor in local politics. In 1834 the plush weavers formed a short-lived lodge of the Owenite Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, and the Temperance Society, in its teetotal phase after 1836, was essentially a proletarian movement.(2) The Banbury Working Mens' Association was founded in October 1838 'to promote the moral, intellectual and political advancement of the working class, to promote the education of the rising generation and the extirpation of those systems which tend to future slavery'. Its leaders included Alexander Spooner, landlord of the Fleur-de-Lys, and Peter Layton a tin plate worker.(3)

(1) ORO 315, Box 16, BRA Mins.1837-39, 6 Sep.1837, 4 May 1838, 26 Oct.1838; BG, 27 Feb.1845; BG 26 Feb.1846; OC & CC, 3 Nov.1838.
(2) Pamela Horn, 'The Banbury Weavers' Union of 1834', C & CH, III, 11, 1968, pp.203-06; OH,26 April 1834; OH,24 May 1834; for the Temperance Society see below pp.167-69
(3) OH,20 Oct.1838; BPL,RC p.98; the correspondence in PRO,HO 40, relating to disturbances in the years up to 1840 has been checked for references to the Banbury area, but there are no letters at all from Oxfordshire magistrates, and none from Warwickshire or Northamptonshire magistrates which relate to the Banbury region.

The formation of the Association was probably prompted by delegates from the London Working Mens' Association. Among the LWMA's most successful missionaries was Henry Vincent, then aged 23, a compositor with an unusual flare for oratory.(1) On Tuesday 27 November 1838 Vincent spoke at noon to a large audience in the Market Place. He later lectured at the Town Hall and the Theatre, and on 29 November addressed an audience of women. He showed sensitivity to the traditional prejudices of Banburians by coupling his advocacy of the Charter, and his denunciation of Tory tyranny. Whig treachery and the New Poor Law, with an attack on the University of Oxford:

> 'Am I to be told that the people of Oxfordshire have not sufficient knowledge to elect members to represent them in Parliament when they have the light of the colleges shining continually upon them? Am I to be told that they are not moral enough when collegiate morality is before them as an example?'(2)

A similar awareness of what would please an audience in Banbury Market Place was shown by the teetotal blacksmith John Hocking, who in 1836 announced that he was going to Oxford 'to hammer and rivet Temperance principles into every student and inhabitant of that metropolis of learning'.(3) Vincent's criticism of the Poor Law led to his being invited to the workhouse which he had to confess was above criticism.(4) Vincent introduced

(1) OH, 20 Oct.1838.

(2) JOJ, 1 Dec.1838; OH, 1 Dec.1838; OC & CC, 1 Dec.1838.

(3) OH, 23 April 1836.

(4) OH, 8 Dec.1838.

three new factors into Banbury politics. He impressed upon his listeners the need for working class unity. As a recent convert to teetotallism he urged sobriety and refused to speak in public houses. He also brought women into politics:

> 'The men of Britain are combining in large masses in order to wring from a reluctant government their just share of political power. What have women to do with politics? My answer is everything!'(1)

During 1839 Chartism became well-established in Banbury. In March a subscription of £3 was sent to the National Convention following a lecture by John Collins.(2) By August regular meetings were being held in a schoolroom on the Green belonging to the Austin family. Speakers called for exclusive dealing and incautiously advised Chartists to 'arm for the fray'. There was an ignominiously unsuccessful attempt to stage a run on the Savings Bank.(3) In 1840 most of the national Chartist leaders were in prison, and subscriptions were collected for them and their wives in Banbury. The Chartists maintained contacts with Henry Vincent while he was in prison. In November 1840 they were preparing a reception for him in Banbury, and on 21 November he issued a 'Letter to the Men of Banbury' from Oakham Gaol, portraying his conversion to moral force:

(1) BPL, RC p.123.

(2) Northern Star, 13 July 1839; Western Vindicator, 20 July 1839; OC & CC, 16 Mar.1839.

(3) BPL, RC p.152; OC & CC, 17 Aug.1839; BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, pp.16,46.

'The mists of ignorance, intemperance, vice, producing as they do, dependent habits, serfish feelings, a crawling slavish disposition, a propensity to extol wealth rather than religion and virtue, a love of murderous war and its vain and empty glory, these are the things that enslave a people. Men of Banbury, let us assail the vice and ignorance of the people; let us root out the rank weeds of servility which our rulers have been planting; let us convince our countrymen that God has made them with capacities and feelings for the enjoyment of the most exquisite happiness; for the realisation of intellectual pleasure; for the exercise of the moral virtues, and has spread equally before all who accept the conditions, a rich banquet of eternal felicity when the storms and turmoils of his life are past'.(1)

Vincent was released on 31 January 1841. He married on 27 February and on 1 March began a five day visit to Banbury, during which it was resolved that he would fight the constituency at the imminent general election. He continued to advocate teetotallism, and described his visit as a recommencement of 'My assaults upon the system'. He told a friend that he had impressed many of the wealthy classes, and predicted that if elected he would sit in 'the Den' for not more than two sessions since 'no respectable working man could associate with such bad characters without losing his reputation'.(2)

(1) Northern Star, 8 Feb.1840; Ibid,28 Mar.1840; Ibid,10 Oct. 1840; Ibid,21 Nov.1840;Ibid,28 Nov.1840; OC & CC,25 Jan.1840;BPL,PC V,p.26.
(2) William Dorling, Henry Vincent, 1879,p.31;BPL,Banbury Cuttings 1838-42,p.88; OC & CC, 13 Mar.1841; Transport House, Vincent MSS, 1/1/46, Henry Vincent - J.Miniken, 8 Mar.1841.

On 3 June he told Francis Place that if three candidates should stand his return was certain, and asked Place to seek assistance from 'those who are favourable to Chartism and would treat the House of Commons to a working man'. Place reminded Vincent that honesty and patriotism were not the most marked characteristics of voters in small boroughs, rebuked him for the excited tone of his letter, and urged him to work at his printing business for a decade, after which he might be in a condition to do some public service.(1) Vincent ignored Place's advice and issued an election address on 4 June. He canvassed vigorously, made two speeches a day, and spent each evening with his committee. 'He was not quiet one minute throughout the contest' remarked one observer.(2)

On most major issues there was little difference between Vincent and Tancred. Against the six points of the Charter, Tancred proposed household suffrage, the ballot and three year parliaments. Vincent's appeals to 'radical and free trade electors' were matched by Tancred's promises of 'free trade, cheap bread, sugar, coffee and timber'. The Chartists referred to the inhumanity of the Poor Law, but it was difficult to establish Tancred's personal responsibility for abuses, and Vincent had previously been embarrassed after exaggerating the conditions at the Banbury workhouse.(3) Vincent complained that Tancred had failed to support proposals to put some financial

(1) Graham Wallas, The Life of Francis Place, 1925 edn,p.379.

(2) National Vindicator, 17 July 1841; Northern Star, 19 June 1841; Ibid, 26 June 1841; W. Dorling, op.cit., p.31.

(3) BPL,PC V,pp.6,35; OC & CC, 3 July 1841; BPL,Case C, f.12.

responsibility on to the fathers of illegitimate children, that he had voted money for the royal stables and kennels, but Liberals could point out that Tancred had opposed Church Rates, that he favoured investigation of the Pensions List, and that he had a long record of voting for some of the points of the Charter. When Vincent appealed for 'cheap good and responsible government' he was speaking in the language of the Liberals. It was only on foriegn policy, on Canada, Syria, China and Spain, that Vincent found his opponent vulnerable.(1)

Vincent's attempts to show that he had the better radical credentials backfired when Henry Warburton and Thomas Duncombe publicly refused to support him.(2) He concentrated on attacking 'the system' and arousing class feeling. 'This is an era' he proclaimed, 'in which the Democracy of England will trample down the aristocracy'. He saw himself as 'one of the industrious classes, with no aristocratic prejudices to corrupt and enslave me', and told a ladies' meeting that food and clothing were 'heavily taxed to support the profligacy of our rulers'.(3) The Banbury Liberals were not unpractised in the art of denouncing the aristocracy. Tancred referred to 'class interests which have hitherto obstructed every effort that has been made to diminish the burdens and to extend the privileges of the people'.(4) Vincent's expressions of class antagonism were tempered by his

(1) BPL,PC V, p.15; BPL, Case C,ff.10,12; BPL, PC XI, pp.6,8.

(2) Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents, 1969, pp.3-5; BPL,PC V, p.29; OC & CC, 26 June 1841.

(3) Bod.Lib. GA Oxon 8° 989; BPL, PC V, pp.1.7.

(4) BPL, PC V, p.3.

proclamation that the interests of middle and working classes were identical, but he was embarrassed when reminded of his past denounciations of 'shopocrats'.(1) He challenged Tancred to a pre-nomination ballot, but like most such challenges it was refused by the stronger party.(2)

On 23 June, only six days before nomination day, the Conservatives brought forward Hugh, eldest son of William Holbech of Farnborough Hall, the very model of the candidate for whom the more thoughtful Tories had yearned since 1832. 'Banbury will do well', commented one newspaper, 'to support one who resides in the Hall of his fathers, and dispenses in the neighbourhood the blessings which may be conferred by a real English gentleman, who has the cause of his country and the neighbourhood at heart!'(3) Holbech did not fight a vigorous campaign and issued only a few posters, proclaiming that he opposed hasty change, upheld the constitution, and favoured a fixed duty on the import of corn.(4) Tancred's supporters publicised the severity with which the game laws were applied at Farnborough, but their concern as nomination day approached was with Vincent. They started rumours that he would not go to the poll, and emphasised that, wittingly or not, the Chartist was the ally of the Tory.(5) After a rowdy election on June 30,

(1) BPL,PC V, pp.10,14,16,19; BPL,PC IX, p.8; BPL,Case C,f.1.

(2) BPL, Case C,ff.17,20,119; BPL,Case D,f.3; BPL,PC V.pp.28,30-34.

(3) OC & CC, 29 May 1841; OC & CC, 19 June 1841; BPL, PC V, p.10; BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42,p.100.

(4) BPL, PC V, p.23.

(5) OC & CC,26 June 1841; BPL,PC V, pp.17,32,34,35,39;BPL, Case C,f.16.

Tancred polled 124 votes, against 100 for Holbech and 51 for Vincent.(1) The Conservatives had a candidate who fulfilled the aspirations of local party leaders, a national movement of opinion was in their favour, and the opposition was divided. Brave prophecies that Holbech would win next time could not disguise the extent of their failure.(2) For the Reformers the result was a relief, if scarcely a triumph, while the performance of the Chartist seemed creditable.

After the election Vincent's committee held a festival in a malthouse belonging to Barnes Austin, 'who had supported Mr. Vincent with his vote and interest'. Eight hundred sat down to tea, speeches were made by Joseph Osborn and the Revd. John Clarke, the Society of Journeymen Tailors presented him with a green velvet vest, and in his speech he 'illustrated democratic principles with great effect and made a most powerful attack upon ignorance, injustice and vice'.(3) Chartists continued to play a lively part in local politics. In September 1841 they disrupted a Liberal meeting on the Corn Laws. The following month open air meetings were addressed by Peter Murray M'Douall, who had just been released from prison, and at the registration court, W. P. Roberts the Chartist solicitor from Bath represented 32 Chartists who claimed the vote. In the municipal election in November, Barnes Austin, Joseph Stuttard, Robert Cockerill, George Thomas and Archibald Dods stood, without

(1) OCC & CC, 3 July 1841; NH, 3 July 1841; Bod.Lib.G A Oxon 8° 989.

(2) NH, 3 July 1841; NH, 10 July 1841.

(3) National Vindicator, 17 July 1841; Northern Star, 17 July 1841; BPL, PC V, p.45.

success, in the Chartist interest.(1)

Vincent attracted the allegiance of the working class radicals including Thomas Brewer, a whitesmith, and the recipient of the letter from Oakham Gaol,(2) Edward French, a journeyman shoemaker forced on account of his Chartist views, to emigrate to Waterloo Iowa, where Vincent found him a prosperous farmer in 1868,(3) and John Buswell, a shoemaker who later settled on the Chartist estate at Snigs End. Some, like Brewer and Evans were teetotallers. He was supported by some trade unions. Yet the ability of the Chartists to fight an effective election campaign with posters, pamphlets and meetings on hired premises, depended on the support of the wealthy, particularly of Barnes Austin, who had inherited his father's brewery in 1840. Five of the nine landlords of his public houses who voted in 1841 supported Vincent. His head brewer, Frederick Fleet, his clerk, Joseph Osborne, and the minister of his Baptist Chapel, John Clarke were active at Vincent's post election festival. Austin voted Conservative in 1835 and had a reputation as a 'fast' man. He was an unlikely patron of a Chartist, and particularly of a teetotaller.(4) His conversion to radicalism may have arisen from a personal antagonism to Francis Litchfield, the most eloquent local apologist for Conservatism. Litchfield's love of hunting did not prevent him from trying to put down sports which threatened public order. In April 1837 a prize

(1) JOJ,2 Oct.1841; CC & CC, 23 Oct.1841; OC & CC,6 Nov.1841; BPL,RC p.195; NH,6 Nov.1841; R. C. Gammage, History of the Chartist Movement 1837-1854,1969 edn., pp.66-67,187,193.

(2) BPL, PC V, p.26.

(3) The Beehive, 20 Feb.1868.

(4) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949,p.117.

fight between Palmer and Lucket took place near Banbury 'at the instigation of some brewers and beerhouse keepers'. A return match was planned for Tuesday 18 April but Litchfield and other magistrates obtained warrants preventing it from taking place in Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire or Warwickshire. They pursued the huge crowd of fight followers from Adderbury to Cottesford Heath, to Whittlewood, and on through Paulerspury and Fenny Stratford to Brickhill Heath near Woburn, where the contest took place a few yards over the Bedfordshire border. As the devotees returned westwards Barnes Austin was involved in a scuffle with Litchfield and other magistrates at Stony Stratford and eleven months afterwards was fined £10.(1) Soon after the court hearing the Banbury Working mens' Association was formed at one of Austin's public houses, and not long afterwards the Chartists were assembling in his school room in South Bar.

During 1842, the year of the Second Chartist petition and the Plug Plot riots, Thomas Cheney, the printer, acted as local agent for Vincent's newspaper, the National Vindicator which was published in Bath. In March the Banbury branch of the National Charter association had 40 members. In April the Northern Star reported with some exaggeration that the Banbury Chartists' meeting room held a thousand.(2) On 23 May Vincent spoke to 1,500 people outside the town hall, but incurred some criticism for delivering most of his speeches to a paying audience in the Theatre. He was accused of 'filling his pockets

(1) NH, 29 April 1837; NH, 17 Mar.1838.

(2) National Vindicator, 12 Feb.1842; Northern Star, 19 Mar. 1842; Ibid, 9 April 1842; Ibid, 30 April 1842.

out of the hard earnings of the poor'.(1) Also in May, 36 people including Barnes Austin, and several Tancred supporters, urged the election of Joseph Sturge in the Nottingham by-election.(2) In July, 13 representatives to the general council of the National Association were nominated. All were working men, and only one had signed the petition supporting Sturge in May.(3) Banbury remained peaceful during the Plug Plot riots, but Chartism seems to have benefited from the agitation elsewhere, for 50 membership cards for the National Association were issued in the quarter ending on 30 September. Some Banbury Chartists formed a branch of Joseph Sturge's Complete Suffrage Union and sent three delegates to the conference in Birmingham in December 1842 called to bring together the CSU and Feargus O'Connor's National Charter Association.(4) One of them was Robert Kemp Philp, a Cornish printer who had edited the National Vindicator with Vincent in Bath. He moved to Banbury late in 1842 and ran a Chartist News Room in Church Lane. He was elected to the committee of the Banbury Mechanics' Institute in May 1843. By 1845 he had moved to London where he edited useful knowledge publications. He was a teetotaller and in March 1844 lectured to the Banbury Temperance Society.(5)

(1) JOJ, 28 May 1842; NH, 28 May 1842.

(2) OC & CC, 4 June 1842; BPL, RC p.200.

(3) Northern Star, 30 July 1842.

(4) Northern Star, 31 Dec.1842; Ibid,14 Jan.1842; BPL,PC V, p.58.

(5) Frederick Boase, ed.,Modern English Biography 1892-1921,sub PHILP: R.G. Gammage, op.cit.,p.402; BPL, Minutes of the Banbury Mechanics' Institute,27 March 1843,25 Sep.1843;BG, 21 Mar.1844.

Locally as nationally Chartism was weakened by splits in 1843. Some organisation remained, but the movement clearly declined. Banbury radicals were beset with a variety of alternative causes. At least four Chartists were drawn into millenarian religion by the Disciples of Christ. Many had links with the local temperance movement, which at the time of the Plug Plot riots in 1842 entered on the period of its greatest prosperity.(1) Chartism survived to influence the general election of 1847 and various municipal contests, and to be a point of reference for radicals in subsequent decades, and for 30 years Henry Vincent drew large audiences whenever he lectured in Banbury.

The registered electorate in Banbury in the 1830s varied between 329 and 386.(2) In 1835 only 246 or 64 per cent of the electors went to the hustings but the turn-out in the more closely fought contests of 1837 and 1841 was respectively 72 and 73 per cent. Banbury was one of 94 boroughs, about half of those represented in the Commons, which had electorates of between 300 and 1,000. There were 31 boroughs with less than 300 electors.(3)

The 1835 election in which the Liberals won 82.5 per cent of the poll is an inadequate indication of the occupational and class basis of support for the parties since the Conservative challenge was so weak. In 1837 the Conservatives won 29.3 per cent of the poll. Only 23 of Tawney's votes came from those

(1) Brian Harrison and Barrie Trinder, Drink and Sobriety in an Early Victorian Country Town: Banbury 1830-1860,1969,pp.18-19; see also below pp.168-69

(2) This paragraph and those which follow are based on analysis of pollbooks.

(3) Norman Gash, Politics in the Age of Peel,1953,pp.77,96.

who had supported Williams in 1835. He attracted the support of 14 new voters, five who had voted Liberal in 1835, and 33 who had been neutral, which shows conclusively that many Conservatives had failed to vote for Williams. Most of the Conservatives of 1835 who failed to support Tawney had died or gone away. Tawney's supporters included his partner J. A. Gillett, and at least two of Gillett's fellow Quakers. Three other Friends who had voted Liberal in 1835 remained neutral. Tancred lost support among craftsmen and retailers, but Liberal support in these two crucial sectors of the electorate remained at over 75 per cent. More than half of the farmers voted for Tawney, and while they comprised less than 5 percent of the Liberal vote, farmers made up over 13 per cent of Conservative support. In the drink trade support for the Conservatives rose to over 40 per cent, comprising 22.67 per cent of the Conservative vote. Drink traders made up only 13.81 per cent of the Liberal vote. The 1841 election saw a substantial erosion of Liberal support. Tancred's vote fell from 181 in 1837 to 124, or 45.09 per cent of the vote. It cannot be assumed that the 51 votes cast for the Chartistswould have gone to the Liberals without a Chartist candidate. Tancred was supported by 98 electors who had voted for him in 1837, five previously neutral and three who had voted for Tawney. One of the latter was a Quaker, perhaps drawn to favour the banker in 1837 by links with the Gilletts, while another was Thomas Ward of the Waterloo lodging house whose vote was assumed to be purchasable. Only 32 of the 89 electors lost to the Liberals between 1837 and 1841 were dead or removed from the town. The Chartists attracted the votes of 18 former Liberals, while seven voted Conservative and 26 remained neutral, an indication, perhaps of disillusion with the Liberal government, and with Tancred's performance as MP. Tancred gained the votes of only 18 of

the 67 electors who polled for the first time in 1841. Holbech's hundred voters included 47 who had voted for Tawney, and seven converts from Liberalism, among them two farmers, two prominent drapers who were Anglicans, and two publicans. Three had once been members of the Reform Association committee. The rise in Conservative support was due to Holbech's appeal to new electors, from whom he gained 25 votes. He had the support of half of those engaged in the drink trade and 61.54 per cent of the farmers. More than half the 51 Chartist votes in 1841 came from new electors. Three had voted Conservative in 1837 two of whom, keepers of low lodging houses were probably attracted by bribes rather than radical principles. Three Chartist voters who had been Liberals in 1837 were landlords of Barnes Austin's public houses. The majority of the Chartist voters were drawn from the poorer ranks of Banbury's craftsmen, 30.51 per cent of whom supported Vincent. Vincent gained the votes of 19.57 per cent of the drink trade, comprising over a fifth of his support, an astonishing proportion for a teetotaller.

The accession to power of Sir Robert Peel's Conservative government, the appointment of Conservative magistrates in 1842, and their nearness to defeat in 1841, shook the confidence of the Banbury Liberals. Their leaders subsequently tried to present Tancred in a more favourable light. In February 1843 for the first time for a decade the Reformers dined together at the Wheatsheaf. Tancred was among the 150 present, and the occasion became an annual tradition. It was held in the early spring and during the 1840s Tancred was normally accompanied by a 'bottle holder', a Liberal MP popular in Banbury, Dr. John Bowring in 1844, Edward Bouverie in 1845 and Sir Andrew Leigh Hay in 1847. Usually up to 200 attended. Provision was always made for teetotallers to drink water or coffee. Toasts usually

included 'Free Trade', 'Civil and Religious Liberty', 'the working classes' and 'the extension of the suffrage and vote by ballot'. Tancred's voting record was questioned at the dinners, and his visits to Banbury were used for meetings with influential or supplicant individuals. On one occasion he asked his agent for 'a list of names of persons whom I ought to see'.(1)

The summer counterpart of the dinner was the annual meeting of the British Schools Society, formed in 1840 at a meeting chaired by Tancred, who gave £100 towards the building of the school, subscribed £5 annually, and attended the first 16 annual meetings. The Liberal MPs William Ewart and Dr. John Bowring were among the guest speakers in the 1840s. The meeting was sometimes followed by a Liberal excursion into the countryside, usually to Edgehill, which was a place of special significance to the Reformers who saw themselves as heirs of the seventeenth century Parliamentarians. In 1843 a group of Liberals travelled to Chalgrove Field for the inauguration of the John Hampden monument. Tancred observed in a speech at the celebration lunch that he was 'surrounded ... by a band of my own warm-hearted constituents', and boasted 'In Banbury we warm ourselves by the reflection that we live on the confines of Edgehill, and we come here today to inflame ourselves, if that were necessary, for the same glorious cause'. His speech

(1) BG, 23 Feb.1843; BG, 29 Feb.1844; BG, 27 Feb.1845; BG, 19 Feb.1846; BG, 26 Feb.1846; BG, 25 Feb.1847; NH, 8 Mar.1845; B. Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.xx,xxi, 8,16,29-30,56-57.

was remembered with particular pleasure by Edward Cobb some 15 years later.(1) Conservative social occasions appear to have been less successful. A dinner was usually held each autumn, but attendances rarely exceeded 60.(2)

Tancred sustained his reputation amongst the wider body of constituents by his support of local causes and his ability to place local men in government jobs. In 1842 he made a donation to the Mechanics' Institute following an appeal by Francis Francillon, who was troubled by the ethics of seeking money from an MP:

> 'I am sure that a donation would not only be popular, but useful, and, as I disdain soliciting it, it would be an unsolicited one if you thought right to make one'.

He subscribed to the Dorcas Society in 1842, to the races in 1845, the Horticultural Society in 1847, the Primitive Methodists in 1848, and to a fund for a sick Baptist minister in 1849. In the severe winter of 1845-46 he made £100 available for the poor.(3) During Peel's ministry between 1841 and 1846 he naturally had little influence in government appointments, but after 1846 he obtained jobs in the Excise for the sons of two prominent Liberals. He was unable to help a dissenting minister to become an Inspector of Schools, to find a post for a bankrupt chemist, or to assist a young plush weaver to become a letter carrier.(4) Appointments as letter carriers were of

(1) B.Trinder, Victorian MP,xxi,xxii,xxix,11,13,23-25,45,121; Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette, 24 June 1843.

(2) OC & CC, 3 Dec.1842; BG, 12 Dec.1844; NH, 14 Dec.1844.

(3) B.Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.xxiv-xxvi,5,17,19,31,47,49.

(4) Ibid,pp.xxvi-xxviii,26-27,32-33,41,45-48.

considerable political importance. When the Middleton Cheney walk became vacant in 1850 Tancred complained 'It rains messengers'. The knowledge that an MP could obtain positions of this kind probably did much to enlist the support of the deferential working class although the appointments were few in number. The right to make them was jealously contested as late as the mid-1860s.(1)

The introduction of Income Tax in the 1842 Budget, the educational clauses of the 1843 Factories Bill, and the increased government grant to the Roman Catholic training college at Maynooth in 1854, were all the subjects of protest meetings in Banbury during Peel's ministry,(2) but while Tancred consistently supported the abolition of the Corn Laws, Liberals avoided open debate on Free Trade. In February 1846 Francis Francillon admitted that Anti-Corn Law League lecturers had not been brought to the town to avoid upsetting the farmers. Nevertheless in 1847 repeal was seen as 'the greatest of moral triumphs'.(3) Several Protectionist meetings held in Banbury were supported by farmers rather than townspeople.(4)

Chartism revived in 1846 with the formation of a branch

(1) Ibid,pp.xxviii-xxiv, 53; ORO 315, Box 41, Bundle cc, Bernhard Samuelson - Sir Charles Douglas, 18 Oct.1866; BA, 1 Nov.1866.
(2) B.Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.5-9,33-34; JOJ,23 April 1842; Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette, 29 April 1843; Ibid,13 May 1843; BG, 9 May 1843; BG, 10 April 1845; BG, 1 May 1845; BG, 8 May 1845; Bod. Lib. GA Oxon.8° 992.
(3) NH,23 Mar.1839; JOJ,2 Oct.1841; OC & CC,2 Oct.1841; Archibald Prentice, The History of the Anti-Corn Law League,1853,I,p.326, II,pp.92,212; BG,26 Feb.1846; BG, 25 Feb.1847.
(4) OH,20 Jan.1844; NH,20 Jan.1844; BG,14 Mar.1844; BG,12 Feb.1846; BG,1 April 1846; NH,14 Feb.1846.

of the Chartist Land Company, whose membership was large in comparison with that of branches in other towns. Two Banbury families settled on the Land Company estate at Snigs End in Gloucestershire.(1) A Chartist offered to stand in the 1847 election, but after Tancred accepted a series of demands, which included the support of universal suffrage, the Chartists gave him their backing.(2) The Conservative candidate in the election was James MacGregor, a Liverpool banker, and chairman of the South Eastern Railway. He fulfilled Joseph Parkes's forecasts that he would prove 'green at Electioneering'. He propounded strongly Protestant sentiments, and made much of his opposition to the Maynooth Grant, but clumsily confessed that his mind was not made up about the extension of the franchise.(3) He suffered from being readily identifiable with all that was disreputable about railway speculation, even to the extent of receiving turbulent support from unemployed navvies who had been engaged to build the Oxford and Rugby Railway.(4)

Tancred won the election, gaining 226 votes (57.95 per cent of the poll) against MacGregor's 164.(5) A comparison

(1) Pamela Horn, 'The Chartist Land Company',C & CH,IV,2,1968, pp.19-23; Northern Star,20 June 1846;Ibid,24 April 1847;Ibid, 12 June 1847; Ibid,3 July 1847; Ibid, 4 Sep.1847.

(2) BPL,PC VI, pp.44,51,61; B. Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.xxiii-xxiv,38-39; NH, 14 Aug.1847.

(3) BPL,PC VI,pp.10,22-23,36;BG,22 July 1847; BG,29 July 1847; BG,5 Aug.1847; B.Trinder, Victorian MP,pp.36-37;BPL,Case C,f.47.

(4) BPL,PC VI,p.24;BG,22 July 1847; BG,5 Aug.1847; NH,10 July 1847;NH, 7 Aug.1847.

(5) This paragraph and those which follow are based on analysis of the poll books for the elections concerned.

with the 1837 election shows that in every significant sector of the electorate there had been a substantial increase in the proportion of electors voting Conservative. The number on the register increased from 383 to 465 between 1841 and 1847 while the turn-out went up from 72 to 84 per cent. MacGregor gained over 70 per cent of the agricultural vote and marginally increased the Conservative share of the votes of the drink trade, and of the retailers. Tancred benefitted most from the division of the Chartist vote. 36 of the 51 voters who had supported Vincent in 1841 voted in 1847, 27 for Tancred and nine for MacGregor, the latter including Barnes Austin, who gave a celebratory party for MacGregor, exactly as he had done for Henry Vincent. MacGregor attracted only two voters who had supported Tancred in 1841, and lost two Holbech voters to the Liberals. Forty voters in 1847 had remained neutral in 1841 and divided almost evenly, 24 for Tancred and 20 for MacGregor. Of the 166 new electors, 93 supported Tancred and 73 MacGregor.

By 1847 Banbury was a safe Liberal constituency. Liberals could appeal to precedent, to return 'our faithful representative for 15 years', and to Banbury's sense of its own identity within a hostile hinterland, declaring, 'for the Liberal Borough of Banbury to return a Tory would be a sad disgrace to us'. Yet the Liberal position no longer appeared unassailable. Conservatives won the town council election of 1847, and their performance in the general election was creditable. One of the characteristics of a safe seat is that it includes an élite willing to strive for the success of their favoured party, and

in Banbury Liberal leaders were still determined to maintain social cohesion among their followers and to keep a pure register. Nevertheless memories were fading of the discredited ancien régime, and of the bliss experienced by those alive at the dawn of the Reformers' triumphs. Banbury was still in 1847 one of the small boroughs which were the seedbed of Victorian Liberalism, but the respectability of Conservativism had been re-established.

Chapter Six.

A Habit of Spontaneous Action.

'Even if the government could comprehend within itself, in each department, all the most eminent intellectual capacity and active talent of the nation, it would not be the less desirable that the conduct of a large portion of the affairs of society should be left in the hands of the persons immediately interested in them'.(1)

There was a revolution in the government of Banbury during the 1830s when the townspeople secured for themselves a degree of control over their own affairs such as they had rarely enjoyed previously. At the same time many of the less formal ways in which the local community operated were transformed. Opportunities for providing charitable aid, and for self-help were enlarged. Educational provision was extended and local culture re-vitalised. In some respects voluntary societies anticipated the functions of the formal institutions of government. At a time when the impact of government on many aspects of the life of the community was minimal, voluntary societies affected the lives of most people rather more than the decisions of the Home Secretary, the Mayor or the Board of Guardians. In the provision of sustenance in adversity, in education and in entertainment there were revolutions between 1830 and 1850 as profound as the contemporary changes in the institutions of government.

Some important bodies in Banbury, the National Schools Society, the Savings Bank and the Visiting Charitable Society were formed about 1820, while the Old Charitable Society dated from 1782. Nevertheless a high proportion of the societies which shaped so much of the life of Victorian Banbury were founded between 1830 and 1850.(2) Organisations like the Mechanics'

(1) J.S.Mill, Principles of Political Economy,1876;edn.,p.572.

(2) Table Seven.

Institute, the Temperance Society, the Choral Society and the Agricultural Association directly or indirectly affected the whole community. Some voluntary societies were centrifugal. They saw themselves as town-centred, and charged with a civilising mission to the countryside. Such groups tended to be Dissenting rather than Anglican, and radical rather than Conservative. Other groups were centripetal, gatherings of the like-minded from the countryside who assembled in the market town to pursue common objectives. Many Anglican organisations were centripetal and largely clerical in their membership. The country parson was often isolated, and he had an obvious need to meet with fellow enthusiasts to aid the mission to Jerusalem or plan the excavation of tumuli. Polarisation between Anglicans and Conservatives and Dissenters and Liberals was always evident among voluntary societies in Banbury. In several areas of activity there were competing societies, and there were disputes when one faction tried to appropriate for itself an institution which was alleged by the other to belong to the community at large. Religious and political divisions could be an incentive to additional provision, but in some spheres polarisation hindered worthwhile developments.

It was observed of voluntary organisations in Banbury in the 1960s that 'the more manifest the functions of an association, the wider the social range of membership - the more diffuse the aims, the more latent the functions, the narrower the social range of membership'.(1) This was also true in the nineteenth

(1) Colin Bell, Eric Batstone and Anne Murcott, Voluntary Associations in Banbury, paper read to the South-West Branch of the British Sociological Association, Bristol, 10 July 1968.

century. Co-operation between factions was possible when there were clearly-defined, non-sectarian objectives, but when an organisation's activities had obvious denominational implications, as in the provision of schooling, or when its social activities took precedence over its declared aims, it tended to recruit from only one politico-religious faction or social class. The latent functions of many societies are not obvious to the historian. The correspondence of Henry Tancred shows that the annual meetings of the British Schools Society also served as rallies for the Liberal Party, but this would not have been discernable from any other source.(1) Other organisations must have had similar latent functions.

The celebration of Queen Victoria's coronation on Thursday 28 June 1838 was a point of reference for Banburians throughout the nineteenth century. It was regarded as an occasion when the middle classes triumphed over their political and religious differences to provide for the poor. Preparations for the event began less than a month beforehand, when there were forecasts of 'such a banquet of fun as would have made our Puritan Banbury forefathers of Cromwell's day look very oddly'. An official committee raised money for a dinner for the poor, while a group of young men sought subscriptions to provide entertainments. There was a procession of the trades similar to that which celebrated the triumph of reform in 1832, a tea for Sunday School children, dancing and sport. The committee earnestly tasted plum puddings in mid-June, believing the proof of the pudding to be in the eating. 1,700 lbs. of such pudding comprised the

(1) Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents,1969,p.xxi.

first course of a meal served in the Horsefair for 'all the working classes and poor who chose to partake of it'. 3,400 sat down at 45 tables, each of which had a tradesman as its superintendent, and four young men as waiters. The pudding was followed by 180 dishes of beef, weighing over 3,000 lbs., with 1,596 lbs. of bread and 45 kilderkins of ale. 'Many who partook of the dinner', reported one observer, 'seemed absolutely entranced at the sight and enjoyment of such liberal fare'. There was much emphasis on class-mixing and on the participation of both sexes, but sectarian differences were never far from the surface. Groups with religious scruples refused to join in the procession, and there were disputes over the toasts to the royal family at a dinner given after the event for the organisers. Nevertheless it was agreed that all party feeling had been set aside, and that the scale of rejoicing had been quite magnificent.(1)

Political and religious rivalries were less well concealed on the occasion of the Queen's wedding in 1840. 'Everybody knows', remarked one newspaper, 'that the people of Banbury can do things well when they do but drop dirty politics', but the whole occasion vibrated with social tension. There was no celebration for the poor. The main event was a ball at the National School. Four hundred attended, equally divided between Liberals and Conservatives. An attempt was made to foster non-sectarian goodwill by arranging for the first dance to be led by William Hunton, son of the Liberal agent, partnering Sarah Rusher, daughter

(1) Alfred Beesley, The History of Banbury, 1841, p.550; OC & CC 9 June, 1838; OC & CC 16 June 1838; OC & CC 23 June 1838; OC & CC 7 July 1838; OH, 9 June 1838; OH, 16 June 1838; JOJ, 7 July 1838.

of a leading Conservative.(1)

Some voluntary associations fulfilled some of the functions of the state or of local authorities, anticipating reforming legislation, and may be categorised as quasi-governmental associations. When such an organisation had a clearly defined non-sectarian purpose it could unite middle-class opinion. The association which did so most successfully was formed to prevent begging, about which a newspaper had complained vehemently in 1832.(2) The Society for the Suppression of Mendicity was founded in 1834 with a committee representing all shades of bourgeois opinion. When mendicants applied to its superintendent, he provided them with a night's lodging at the 'Mendicity House', on condition that they left the town the following day. Over 2,000 were thus accommodated in four years, most of whom were mechanics and labourers seeking work, rather than beggars. About 15 per cent were Irish and Scots, and in 1838 the society was wound up because people were said to be reluctant to spend money on 'beggars from other countries'. The society was praised as 'the means of clearing the town of the swarms of vagabonds with which it was formerly infested'.(3) Doubtless by 1838 its functions were being assumed by the new Union Workhouse, and in

(1) Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892,p.51; OC & CC, 15 Feb.1840; BPL, Banbury Cuttings 1838-42, p.54.

(2) NH, 17 Mar.1832.

(3) BPL, RC pp.108,134; NH, 8 Feb.1834; NH, 15 Feb.1834; OH, 1 Feb.1834; OH, 15 Feb.1834; OH, 5 April 1834; OC & CC, 10 June 1838; OC & CC, 3 Feb.1838; OC & CC, 4 Aug.1838; OH, 11 Aug.1838; JOJ, 9 June 1838.

many ways it had anticipated the policies towards vagrants adopted by the New Poor Law. It was the most effective quasi-governmental agency in the town because the divisions among the middle classes were bridged by a clear common purpose.

Societies formed to protect property may also be regarded as quasi-governmental associations. Their purposes would appear to have been clearly manifest. Yet societies of this kind in Banbury exemplified the fundamental division within the middle classes because their manifest aims became obscured by their social functions. The Neithrop Association for the Prosecution of Felons was formed before 1820, when it had 20 members, and was already holding an annual dinner. By 1833 membership had risen to 36, but it fell to 12 by 1837, and stood at only 17 in 1842. It was a predominantly Conservative body. Prosecutions were rarely undertaken. In 1843 only £3.14.2d. was spent, while accumulated funds totalled £84.10.0d. The association had become an exclusive, self-perpetuating body, largely Conservative and Anglican in membership, with undefined entry qualifications.(1) The Banbury Association for the Prosecution of Felons was formed at the suggestion of James Beesley, the town clerk, in 1835. The annual subscription was only five shillings with an entry fee of the same amount. Each member had to pay half a crown a year for a dinner whether he attended or not. In 1836 it had 62 members, 25 of whom lived outside the borough. Eighteen of the Banburians voted Liberal in 1835, and five Conservative. During the 1840s the association undertook about 40 prosecutions,

(1) ORO, 315, 12 AC, Minutes of the Neithrop Association for the Prosecution of Felons.

posted bills and offered rewards.(1) It probably came into existence to remedy the shortcomings of the Neithrop Association, and it may be seen as part of the reform of the ancien régime in Banbury, but the place of the annual dinner in the constitution suggests that it also had a social role as the Liberal counterpart to what had become a Conservative dining club.

The education of the young was regarded in mid-nineteenth century Banbury as the province of private enterprise and Christian philanthropy, but certainly not as part of the business of government. At least 50 private schools operated in the town between 1832 and 1850, ranging from the prestigious Banbury Academy to small classes taught by individuals in their own homes, some in houses as cramped as those in Monument Street or Spring Cottages.(2) The Blue Coat School, founded in 1705, catered for a minority of the children of the poor.(3) The most significant development of the early nineteenth century was the realisation that market forces were incapable of providing adequately for increasing numbers of children, and that the influence of the endowed charity schools was no more than marginal. The response was to establish voluntary schools, linked to national organisations, and run by local committees, their income being a mixture

(1) BPL, Cashbook and Register of the Banbury Association for the Prosecution of Felons, 1835-47; Articles and Rules of An Association for defraying the expenses of apprehending and prosecuting Thieves and Other Offenders in Banbury and its Neighbourhood, established 1 January 1836, 1839.

(2) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(3) VCH, Oxon X, pp.121-22; John Portergill, 'The Banbury Bluecoat Foundation', C & CH, VII, 1, 1976, pp.19-22.

of low fees collected from pupils, local subscriptions, and some support from the national bodies, which in turn received government funds. The establishment of such bodies anticipated publicly-financed education for the poor in much the same way that the Mendicity Society anticipated the New Poor Law. The Banbury National School was founded in 1817. It absorbed the Thorpe Charity School, on whose land in Southam Road its buildings were erected. On payment of £30 p.a. by the Blue Coat Trustees, as many children as the trust could clothe were allowed to attend the National School free of charge. Initially the school was supported by wealthy dissenters as well as by churchmen.(1)

In 1833 a government enquiry identified seven schools in Banbury in addition to the National School, although the local directory for that year listed sixteen.(2) Many private schools had denominational affiliations. The Banbury Academy was linked with the Unitarians, and the boarding school run by the Misses Eason with the Baptists. The first public dissenting school was an Infants School established in Church Passage in 1835 following a meeting addressed by Samuel Wilderspin, the advocate of infant education. Parents whose children had outgrown it demanded a British School, which was built in Crouch Street, in 1839-40.(3)

While the Dissenters were extending their educational role from the infant to the elementary stage, the Anglicans became involved with a secondary school. In April 1839 the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education was formed, one of its aims being to

(1) A. Beesley, op.cit., p.543; BPL, RC pp.114,189-90,212.

(2) Education Enquiry Abstract, H.C.62; BPP,1835,XLII,p.740.

(3) A. Beesley, op.cit.,p.559; OH,28 Feb.1835;OH,8 Aug.1835; NH,20 June 1840;B.Trinder, Victorian MP,p.xxi. Lt.Fabian RN had lectured on the British Schools Society in Banbury in 1832 (OH,17 Mar.1832).

establish 'boarding or other middle or commercial schools for the sons of the farmer and the trader'. Meetings in Banbury in 1840 resolved to raise £2,500 in £25 shares, and to advertise for a 'classical and commercial teacher'. Soon afterwards, John Thomas Cooke, who claimed to have been Professor of English at the Imperial University of St. Petersburg, became master of what was variously called the Diocesan School, the Middle School, or the Classical Commercial School, at Cherwell House in Bridge Street. Tuition in Latin, French, English, Geography, History, Arithmetic and Drawing was offered at £4 pa. for day boys and £20p.a. for boarders. There were 36 pupils in July 1841, and in December 1842 the school was said to be 'increasing in numbers and usefulness'. The venture faltered in 1843 or 1844, Cooke became master of a private 'classical and commercial' school in Crouch Street, and in the 1850s went to Aynho Grammar School, and subsequently to Switzerland.(1) The failure of this attempt to provide a higher level of education through a public institution is perhaps an indictment of sectarian education. A non-denominational school might have succeeded in attracting sufficient able pupils, and such a school could considerably have influenced the development of the town. Banbury was rather too small in the 1840s to support rival establishments at this level. While sectarian enthusiasm had the effect of enlarging the provision of elementary schooling, denominational rivalries inhibited the growth of education at higher levels.

The Roman Catholics established their own educational system in the 1840s. Previously Catholic children had attended a private

(1) BPL, RC pp.150,157,198; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window,1949,p.33; OH,24 Dec.1842;NH, 21 Mar.1840;NH,31 July 1841;NH,11 Mar.1843;PRO, 1851 Census, HO 107.

school run, with a variety of other enterprises by one John Howell. In 1846 a new school opened in a building adjacent to St. John's church, and Howell's establishment closed. In 1849 it provided free education for a hundred children of the poor, and taught about a dozen fee-payers. In 1852 it was taken over by the Sisters of Charity of St. Paul.(1)

In 1851 some 1,668 children were attending school in Banbury, and about half of their places were provided by the four publicly accountable elementary schools, made up as follows:

National School (1847)	240
Infant School (1854)	250
British School (1854)	270
Roman Catholic School (1849)	110
Total	870 (2)

The ages of children in school varied from two (nearly 30 per cent of two year olds were at school) to eighteen, although most children had left by the age of fourteen. Of those aged between five and ten, some 77.29 per cent were attending school, which suggests that the growth of voluntary schools since the 1830s had the effect of making elementary education available for all but the poorest children. In the 11-14 age group only 57.48 per cent of children were at school.(3) William Wilson's survey

(1) A. G. Wall, St. John's Church, Banbury, 1938, p.22; BPL, RC p.2; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

(2) Martin Billing, Directory and Gazetteer of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, 1854, p.129; BPL, RC p.212; A.G.Wall, op.cit.,p.22.

(3) Table Eight.

of Neithrop in 1850 shows that 113 out of 198 children in that very poor area went to the National Schools, regardless of the religious affiliations of their parents.(1) Thirty four children went to the Nonconformist Infants School, but only two to the British School. Although the latter was some distance from Neithrop, it is probable that few children from the area went there because it catered more for the middle class than the poor. Thirty four Neithrop children, some the offspring of labourers, went to dames' schools.

In the sphere of adult education, the outstanding innovation in early nineteenth century Banbury was the Mechanics' Institute, founded at a meeting of 61 people at the home of William Bigg, the Quaker chemist, on 12 March 1835, following a suggestion made after Samuel Wilderspin's lecture on infant schools. On 20 September 1836 a new building was opened in Church Passage. A library was established, drawing and music classes began, a museum was founded, and in a manuscript magazine members recorded their interests and exercised their literary talents. Well-known lecturers were brought to the town, including J. S. Buckingham, who received 40 guineas for lectures on Palestine and Egypt in 1836. Some members spoke about their own interests. Francis Francillon lectured on the Battle of Edgehill, George Harrison on 'Ancient Britons and Druidism', and Edward Cobb on the law of property. The Institute was primarily but not entirely a Liberal and Nonconformist body, but members included such varied people as Dr. Tandy, the Roman Catholic priest, Alfred Beesley,

(1) Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966, p.119.

the historian, and R. K. Philp, the Chartist. Sometimes conflicts with political implications arose within the Institute. In 1838 Alfred Beesley questioned whether John Minter Morgan's Hampden in the Nineteenth Century was suitable for the library, and it was withdrawn. The Institute affiliated in 1840 to the Midland Counties Literary and Scientific Association, and tried to spread its zeal into the countryside. A branch at Steeple Aston was established in 1837, and encouragement given to a new institute at Witney in 1838.(1)

In the 1840s the Institute fell into debt, and facilities in the reading room were reduced. The deliberations of the committee often appear petty and lacking in vision. In March 1851 the committee regretted that the institute was 'so little valued by the classes for whose benefit it was established and is kept up'.(2) Mechanics' institutes can be criticised as organisations which failed in their declared objectives of enlarging educational opportunities for the working class, and which, where they did attract working class members, acted as de-politicising providers of entertainment and agencies of social control. In a society which was markedly polarised, the Banbury Institute sought to achieve limited cultural objectives while avoiding the minefields of political and religious controversy. The insistence in its rules that 'the Institute shall not at any time be perverted ... to serve the purposes of any party, sect or establishment, in politics or religion; or be made the instrument

(1) BPL,MI Mins. I-III; BG,14 Mar.1878;BG,14 Jan.1875; OH,6 Mar.1835;OH,13 Mar.1835.

(2) BPL, MI Mins.,III,23 Mar.1850.

of any party in questions of local politics' was very necessary.(1) The Institute gave the town its first public library and museum. It proved an organisational framework for the promotion of lectures, and premises on which other organisations could meet. It encouraged a serious attitude towards learning. One prominent citizen recalled in 1878 that he was persuaded by William Bigg, 'to give up frivolous pursuits for the Mechanics' Institute, to his benefit'.(2) An eloquent tribute to the Institute in its early years was paid by Edward Cobb in 1876:

> 'some of the happiest days of my life were spent in its service, certainly the most useful and valuable to myself, for it brought me into contact with a class of persons with whom I had previously had very little commerce, from whom I not only derived a great deal of information of a kind I did not before possess, but was led by frequent discussion upon general subjects with some of the more intellectual members gradually to wipe off many erroneous views and prejudices which I had imbibed in some of the earlier years of my life when I can scarcely be said to have had any opinions at all. It completely changed my political views, if, indeed, I may be said to have had any before'.(3)

The anti-slavery movement was one of the most effective voluntary agencies in Banbury. The town was notorious for its

(1) Ibid, I, 9 April, 1835.

(2) BG,14 Mar.1878.

(3) BG,14 Jan.1857.

opposition to slavery. The issue was prominent in the election of 1832 and subsequent elections.(1) Opposition to slavery was the first issue which turned the eyes of concerned Banburians overseas. The movement was successful because it was a cause and not an organisation. An anti-slavery meeting in August 1830 attracted an audience of 500, and led to the formation of a branch of the Anti-Slavery Society. After the emancipation of 1833 the branch was wound up.(2) Subsequent activities were arranged on an ad hoc basis but were remarkably successful. A meeting in May 1838 called to protest against the apprentice system in the colonies was said to be the largest public meeting ever held in Banbury. The speakers included Liberals, Conservatives, Anglicans and Dissenters of many sorts.(3) Because it lacked formal organisation the anti-slavery movement provided few occasions for clashes of culture. Its aims were clear and widely accepted, and its strength lay in the diversity of its support.

Teetotallers were regarded with as much suspicion in Banbury as among the congregation at Mark Rutherford's Tanner's Lane chapel, where, 'If once a man differed so far from his fellows as not to drink beer and spirits, there was no knowing where the division might end'.(4) The temperance movement manifestly strove for social reform, although its aims were incapable of realisation by parliamentary bills, and until the 1850s legislation was not regarded as an appropriate objective. In practice in Banbury as elsewhere it developed a variety of latent functions.

(1) See above p.118.

(2) JOJ,28 Mar.1830;OH,11 Aug.1832;OH,18 Aug.1832;OH,16 Nov.1833.

(3) JOJ,4 May 1838.

(4) Mark Rutherford,The Revolution in Tanner's Lane,1887 edn.,p.321.

The temperance movement first appeared in Banbury early in 1834 when Samuel Beesley, Quaker, confectioner and Liberal, called together fifteen 'gentlemen of influence' to meet the Revd. William Fisher, agent of the British and Foreign Temperance Society, the London-based anti-spirits organisation, which already had several branches in Oxfordshire. A branch was formed in Banbury which, like the BFTS nationally, tried to achieve its objects by influencing the influential.(1) Just as the national temperance movement was set ablaze by an infusion of working class teetotal zeal from Preston in 1834, so in Banbury the cause was transformed in April 1836 by John Hockings, the teetotal blacksmith from Birmingham. His humour and lecturing skill drew 500 to one meeting, and he gave a public demonstration that abstinence had not impaired his ability as a smith.(2) He won twenty teetotal pledges, and transformed the Temperance Society from a discreet pressure group into a popular crusade. Within three months it had 120 members, of whom 71 were teetotallers, seven of them 'reclaimed drunkards'. Two years later membership had increased to 170, and experience meetings had become a central part of the society's activities.(3) There was friction between teetotallers and moderationists, but gradually the former predominated. The founder of the movement in Banbury, Samuel

(1) British and Foreign Temperance Herald, Sep.1834,p.100; British and Foreign Temperance Society,Fourth Annual Report,1835,p.58; B.H.Harrison and B.Trinder, Drink and Sobriety in an Early Victorian Country Town: Banbury 1830-60,1969.p.15.

(2) OH,23 April 1836;Preston Temperance Advocate,July 1836,p.53.

(3) JOJ,31 Dec.1836;OH,31 Dec.1836; New British and Foreign Temperance Society, First Annual Report,1836,p.39; Second Annual Report,1838,p.54; B.H.Harrison and B.Trinder, op.cit.,pp.16-17.

Beesley, retained wine and beer to the value of £50 on his annual inventory until 1840, when, it may be supposed, he became an abstainer.(1) Many teetotallers were also Chartists, and worked for Henry Vincent in the election of 1841. After the failure of the Chartist challenge in the election, the Temperance Society entered a third phase. It ceased to be primarily an evangelistic body, and began to provide alternatives to established institutions. Early in 1842 a temperance hotel was opened, and John Head, a Quaker, fitted up a 'large and commodious room' in Parson's Street which served the temperance movement for a quarter of a century. A ladies association was formed and the society began to mission in the villages. Membership rose to over 400 by the middle of 1842, and exceeded 500 a year later.(2) The typical activity became the middle-class tea party rather than the experience meeting, listening to the confessions of reclaimed drunkards. The society functioned like a branch of the Anti-Corn Law League, and drew its strength from the same social forces. 'We have had our meetings of dissenting ministers', said Cobden in September 1842, 'we have obtained the co-operation of the ladies; we have resorted to tea-parties; and taken those pacific means for carrying out our views which mark us rather as a middle-class set of agitators'.(3) In September 1844 a Rechabite 'tent', a teetotal friendly society was formed in

(1) Beesley Papers, penes D.G.W.Brown,Esq.,of Sunderland,Co.Durham.

(2) British and Foreign Temperance Intelligencer,26 Feb.1842,p.70, 19 Mar.1842,p.95,16 April 1842,p.122,4 June 1842,p.179,6 Aug.1842, p.353; Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette, 27 May 1843; B.H. Harrison and B. Trinder, op.cit., pp.18-19.

(3) John Morley, Life of Richard Cobden, 1881 edn.,vol.I,p.249.

Banbury, its first festival being modelled on the traditional Club Day celebrations.(1) By 1844 a Teetotal Brass Band was practising in the Temperance Rooms.(2) A publican stood in the town council elections in 1844 as an anti-Teetotal candidate. Coffee was always provided at Reformers' dinner for abstainers.(3) After 1845 the income and membership of the society stagnated. Only meetings addressed by well-known speakers attracted large audiences. From 1846 an increasing emphasis was put on the advocacy of abstinence among children, as if the members had despaired of achieving their aims within their own generation.(4)

The Temperance Society received financial support from a wide section of respectable society. Subscribers in 1845 included Conservatives and Anglicans, as well as Liberals and Dissenters who were not teetotallers, but active members included no magistrates, councillors or Conservatives, and were for the most part Liberals and Dissenters. The most prominent members were Quakers and Primitive Methodists, members of the only two denominations in Banbury who numbered no publicans among their adherents.(5) Temperance had become, by the late 1840s, a weltanschauung, a calendar of events for a portion of Banbury's dissenters. Its purpose, to bring sobriety to a society afflicted by a serious problem of public drunkenness, remained manifest, but it had developed many latent functions. It provided an alternative hierarchy of offices for talented Dissenters. With the Mechanics' Institute, it popularised the lecture. Through its meeting rooms, hotel and friendly societies, it provided facilities otherwise available only to those prepared to drink.

(1) Metropolitan Temperance Intelligencer and Journal, 14 Sept. 28 Sep.1844; BG, 5 Sep.1844.

(2) BG, 19 Dec.1844.

(3) See above pp.146-47

(4) B.H. Harrison and B.Trinder, op.cit., pp.22-24.

(5) BPL,RC p.210;B.H.Harrison and B.Trinder,op.cit.,pp.20-23.

It helped to break down the segregation of the sexes in public life. Yet in origin its purposes were more akin to those of the anti-slavery movement than the Mechanics' Institute.

The Banbury Agricultural Association was an organisation of very different complexion from the Temperance Society, but there are curious parallels between the two bodies. The association was centripetal, an assembly in the market town of farmers and landowners from the hinterland. It was formed in 1834 to ensure that protection for agriculture was not diminished. Like many such societies it began to organise meetings at which cattle were judged and awards given to loyal labourers. The Northampton Herald pointed out in October 1842 that the purpose of the association was to protect the agricultural interest not to exhibit stock, and insisted that its committee should meet, according to the rules, on the first Thursday of each month that Parliament was in session.(1) As in the Temperance Society, the latent functions of the association were taking precedence over its manifest objectives.

Several religious societies met regularly in Banbury by the 1840s, their main social function, like that of the Clerical Meetings and Book Society in George Eliot's Milby, having been to provide meeting places for country clergymen.(2) The local auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded in 1817, and was supported by Wesleyans and Quakers as well as by Anglicans,(3) as was the local branch of the London Association

(1) NH,18 Oct.1834; NH,2 Mar.1839; NH,15 Oct.1842.

(2) George Eliot, Scenes of Clerical Life,1927 edn.,p.192.

(3) BPL,RC pp.241-42,247,255,259;NH,3 Aug.1839;JOJ,21 July 1843.

for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, formed in 1842.(1) By the late 1840s the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and the Church Missionary Society were also active.(2)

The public lecture, by 1850, was an established part of the cultural pattern in Banbury, although it had been an unknown medium 20 years earlier. The promotion of lectures was pioneered by the Mechanics' Institute and the Temperance Society, and by 1850 other organisations were following their example. Women normally attended lectures, which led to agitation for premises which were not on licensed premises. The Mechanics' Institute and the Temperance Society provided such rooms, and when demanding a new town hall in 1850, one speaker called for better facilities for occasions when 'they wishes to take ladies to lectures or what not'.(3)

Before the 1830s concerts and plays were part of the ancien régime. They were provided by professionals under the patronage of the town's traditional rulers. In 1821 The School for Scandal was staged under the patronage of the Earl of Guilford.(4) During the 1830s new institutions provided means of staging concerts without the help of wealthy individuals, and provided opportunities for local people to make their own musical entertainments. Banbury's theatre was a large building in Church Lane

(1) BPL, RC pp.203-04,235,250;NH,12 Nov.1842;BG,16 Oct.1845.

(2) BPL RC,pp.210,213-14,247,253; Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; Bod.Lib., GA Oxon 8° 994.

(3) BG, 31 Oct.1850.

(4) Cheney & Sons, Specimens of Work.

erected by James Hill.(1) For about two months at the beginning of each year a season was staged there by Henry Jackman's itinerant company, which from 1805 until 1863 moved between the small towns of an area which stretched from the northern fringes of London to Market Harborough and Ludlow.(2) In 1838 one newspaper commented that 'his company of comedians have again come to waste their sweetness on the desert air of Banbury', and maintained that audiences were always thin, but in 1842 performances were well supported, and in 1848 the respectable way in which Jackman conducted the theatre was commended.(3) Performances were usually double or triple bills, appealing to many tastes, ranging from King Lear to displays by performing dogs. Some performances were usually patronised by individuals or local organisations.

In October 1844 a concert was given at the Theatre under the patronage of Colonel and Lady North of Wroxton Abbey. A month later the Banbury Choral Society gave its first public concert, a selection from Messiah, at the British Schools.(4) The change of organisation epitomised the changing pattern of artistic patronage in the town. The Choral Society was established with 33 members in May 1844 with the object of:

> 'stimulating the hard-worked mechanic to find a pleasing and grateful relaxation from the toilsome cares of life in the practice of Music, rather than, as now, waste the prowess of body and mind amid the debauchery of sensual indulgence'.(5)

(1) Lou Warwick, Theatre Unroyal, 1974,p.149; George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949,pp.57,97,103.

(2) Lou Warwick, op.cit., p.124.

(3) OH, 3 Feb.1838; JOJ,26 Feb.1842; BG,6 Jan.1848.

(4) BPL, Case G, ff.43-44.

(5) BG, 18 Sep.1845.

An Amateur Musical Society was founded in the 1830s but seems to have languished. The Philharmonic Society founded in 1847 gave occasional public concerts.(1) The Banbury Brass Band was formed in 1836.(2) Visiting musicians gave increasing numbers of concerts in Banbury. In 1846 a Signor Morzini, a violinist somewhat improbably billed as a German, gave a recital at the White Hart. In 1848 a concert was given by Mr. and Mrs. J. Pattinson, during which 'operatic selections from the highly celebrated Composer Rossini' were performed.(3) A photograph of George Herbert and his musical friends in the 1850s shows how music could overcome sectarian barriers.(4) The group comprised a coal merchant, a grocer's commercial traveller, a shoemaker, a printer and a teacher of music who had once belonged to Henry Jacknan's theatrical company. Two were Conservatives, and one a Liberal with Chartist sympathies. One was a Unitarian, one an Anglican and others attended no place of worship. Nevertheless no activity in Banbury was without its sectarian implications. When the Choral Society was founded it was thought necessary to declare that 'its rules can be scrutinised by all denominations'.(5)

Succour for the needy in early nineteenth century Banbury

(1) BPL,RC p.189; BPL Case G,f.41;BG,25 Nov.1852,2 Dec.1852.

(2) B. Trinder, Victorian MP, p.116.

(3) BPL, Case G,f.41.

(4) G.Herbert, op.cit., facing p36.

(5) BPL, Case G, ff.7,10.

was provided by paternalist philanthropy, or by small and often financially unstable friendly societies. By 1850 most relief was given through larger organisations with a measure of public accountability. The main development among friendly societies in the period was the growth of the affiliated orders, represented in Banbury by the Manchester Unity and Independent Order of Oddfellows, and by the Rechabites.(1) In the Reform Procession in 1832, 22 different occupations were represented, grouped into 15 trade clubs.(2) Banbury's Club Day was on the first Tuesday of July when friendly societies paraded to a church service before spending the afternoon feasting. In the evening they paraded the streets with their banners, and serenaded honorary members before closing the day with dancing at public houses.(3) To some extent the old clubs were superseded by the Oddfellows whose national organisation offered greater financial security, but it is difficult to establish the extent to which the Oddfellows' lodges were reincarnations of older clubs. The Oddfellows organised a railway excursion to London in 1842, and there were three lodges of the Independent Order in Banbury the following year. By 1848 the British Queen Lodge of the Manchester Unity order was established.(4) New politically based societies were also formed, the Conservative Friendly Society in 1837 and a Reformers' society shortly afterwards.(5)

(1) P.H.J.H.Gosden, Self-Help: Voluntary Associations in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1973,pp.28-29,39-76.

(2) George Herbert, op.cit.,facing p.116.

(3) BG, 8 July 1847.

(4) BPL,RC p.198; JOJ,21 July 1843;BA, 20 Aug.1868.

(5) JOJ, 4 July 1843.

Another outlet for working-class savings was the Bank for Savings founded in 1818 which opened its own premises in 1839. Its bankers were the Cobbs, but a political balance was maintained by having Colonel North of Wroxton as its patron. In 1837 it held over 2,000 deposits.(1) The Banbury Small Savings Society was established in 1847-48 with the object of encouraging saving in the summer when work was plentiful, so that members would have money for essentials in winter. It was suspected of prying into the state of working class savings.(2) The Medical Aid Society, founded by 1838, helped people to save for medical assistance, and the Refuge Society, formed in 1844 collected small sums weekly to give relief in case of sickness.(3) There were two chapel- rather than public house-based friendly societies in addition to the Rechabites. The United Christian Benefit Society, which met on Wesleyan premises, was founded with 30 members in 1841 and trebled its membership within six years. The Mutual Aid Society, a burial club founded by the Baptist Caleb Clarke in 1843, became one of the largest friendly societies in the town.(4)

Self-help groups could proliferate without causing social stress since they did not appeal to the public. The course of societies which raised money from the public for distribution to the needy was less smooth. The Old Charitable Society, established in 1782, was governed by a committee of deputies from the various congregations, and its income came from a special service

(1) BPL,PC X, p.16; OC & CC, 25 Mar.1837.

(2) BPL,RC pp.216,218,256; JOJ,27 Mar.1847; BPL,PC VI,p.67.

(3) JOJ,6 Jan.1838; NH,11 July 1846.

(4) BG,4 June 1846; NH,7 Nov.1846; BA,28 Sep.1876.

at St. Mary's attended by all denominations. This practice ceased in 1847 when special sermons were preached in all the churches and chapels in the town.(1) The Visiting Charitable Society was founded about 1820, and by 1843 was spending about £100 p.a. on distressed families. Both societies became the subject of bitter disputes between Anglicans and Dissenters in the 1850s.(2) Other bodies had clear denominational affiliations. The Banbury and Neithrop Clothing Society was a Church organisation, closely linked with the National Schools.(3) The Dorcas Society was formed by wives of leading Nonconformists in 1842 and was later connected with the Independent Church.(4) However illogical the duplication caused by rival provision, it is probable that more of the poor were relieved by the many competing organisations in Banbury than would have been possible under any more rational system.

Traditional recreation in Banbury was based on the occasion rather than the organisation, and was administered informally by groups who were not publicly accountable and rarely left records. Such organisations were found at both extremes of the social scale. The new forms of publicly accountable, formally organised recreation were typically arranged by the middle classes. One traditional activity was the annual ball for the nobility at the Red Lion in January, which was attended by the leading local landed families, and from which the townspeople were excluded.(5) The gentry were also involved in the race meetings held in the

(1) BPL RC,p.221; BG 21 Mar.1850; BG, 11 April 1850.

(2) JOJ,19 July 1843; BG,14 Mar.1843. See below pp.257-58.

(3) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories show that its officials were always teachers at the National Schools.

(4) BG,3 Mar.1842; B. Trinder, Victorian MP, p.7.

(5) JOJ,17 Feb.1838; BG,6 Feb.1845; BG,24 Feb.1848.

meadows on the Northamptonshire side of the Cherwell. In 1845 J. M. Severne, squire of Thenford had his coat stolen.(1) On the first day of the meeting the gentry were prominent but in the evening and on the second day the criminal classes dominated the proceedings. In 1843 policemen trying to quell a riot were stoned and hissed, and in 1844 a man who had been seen in the company of hardened racecourse prowlers was found drowned.(2) The horse races were followed by pony and hurdle races of a rustic nature. There were booths, erected by publicans who subscribed £1, selling Newcastle salmon and gin mixed with cloves. Dancing and drinking went on through the night. A timber merchant always erected a temporary bridge over the Cherwell to give access to the course.(3) After the 1846 meeting the course was taken over by the Great Western Railway. 'Before another season', commented the Banbury Guardian 'we trust to see the fleeter locomotive where on Tuesday we expect the high-mettled racer'.(4) Race meetings continued on other courses but they never became great social occasions.

Another traditional activity was the annual wake in Newland each July, at which a mock mayor was elected. There were races for men and women, and the 'rough lot' who organised it were prone to steal from nearby gardens. After a night of hard drinking following the wake of 1843 a man was killed in a fight with a publican. A similar wake was held in Grimsbury, but was

(1) BG, 14 Aug.1845.

(2) BG,8 Aug.1843;BG 25 July 1844;BG 22 Aug.1844;BPL,PC VI,p.64.

(3) BG,8 Aug.1844;BG 6 Aug.1846; JOJ,15 May 1830; JOJ,13 Aug.1842.

(4) BG, 30 July 1846.

not noticed in the press in the 1830s and 40s.(1) Elections too were recreational occasions of a traditional nature. During the 1841 contest Edward Cobb remarked that MPs should be chosen with 'no excitement, neither flags, nor banners, nor bands of music nor colours of any kind'.(2) These were exactly the festival trimmings which made elections like race meetings or fairs.

The outstanding occasion in Banbury's recreational calendar was the Michaelmas Fair, which gained importance as a festival as, with the growth of regular markets, it lost its specific economic functions.(3) It was an occasion when showmen, cheap-jacks and criminals crowded into Banbury, and when disorder was always prevalent. The legal framework of the fair was the responsibility of the corporation, but its recreational aspects were entirely informal, depending on which showmen came to the town, and on the spontaneous decisions of the pleasure seekers.

A new occasion, which was formally organised by a voluntary association, was the annual horticultural show. A Flori- and Horticultural Society was in existence in the 1830s, but a new society, in which the Munton family were prominent, was founded in February 1847, and held its first show on the Flying Horse bowling green on 14 September of that year, attracting over 800 people. The event became one of the principal occasions in the recreational year.(4)

(1) George Herbert, op.cit., p.103;BG, 20 July 1843; Alfred Beesley, op.cit., p.274; See below pp. 82-83

(2) BPL,PC V, p.24.

(3) See above p.81-82

(4) B.Trinder, Victorian MP, p.31; BG,16 Sep.1847; BG,16 Mar.1848.

The lack of public open spaces prevented most Banburians from taking part in sport in the early nineteenth century. Bowls was played on a green at the Flying Horse long before 1830, and there was a cricket ground on the Oxford Road, used by a club founded in 1836.(1) The most typical sporting events were 'occasions', like the Palmer-Luckett prize fight of 1836, or the rat-catching in the tithe barn remembered by George Herbert.(2)

In Banbury before 1830 entertainment, schools, and sustenance were provided as acts of individual philanthropy. During the 1830s and 40s there grew up a range of voluntary societies through which the bourgeoisie and the labour aristocracy came to exercise control over their own recreation, education and provision against adversity. They did this through voluntary associations, administered by committees, responsible to annual meetings of subscribers. Some societies were founded before 1830, and paternalist means of provision survived after 1850, but the essential change, the great quickening in the rate of foundation of voluntary groups, came in the thirties and forties, and it was stimulated by the polarisation of local society, and by the constant background of vice, drunkenness and disorder. By 1844 the Banbury Guardian could remark:

> 'There are few if any towns of the size of our own that can boast of so great a variety of societies for the amelioration of the condition of suffering humanity, and the promotion of the welfare of the different classes of the community',(3)

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; OH,16 July 1836; OH,23 July 1836.

(2) George Herbert, op.cit., p.71.

(3) BG, 19 Dec.1844.

and it went on to cite the schools, the Mechanics' Institute, the Old Charitable Society and the Temperance Brass Band as examples. This represented as much of a revolution in local society as the change in parliamentary representation in 1831-32, or the takeover of the borough corporation by the Reformers in 1832. John Stuart Mill wrote in 1848:

> 'It is of supreme importance that all classes of the community, down to the lowest, should have much to do for themselves; that as great a demand should be made upon their intelligence and virtue as it is in any respect equal to; that the government should not only leave as far as possible to their own faculties the conduct of whatever concerns themselves alone, but should suffer them, or rather encourage them, to manage as many as possible of their joint concern by voluntary co-operation'.(1)

Mill was not necessarily simply asserting what ought to happen in an ideal society. He could equally well have been making a descriptive statement about what had happened in towns like Banbury during the 1830s and 40s.

(1) J. S. Mill, Principles of Political Economy, 1876 edn., p.573.

Chapter Seven.

A Market Town during the Great Victorian Boom: Banbury 1850 - 1870

Substantial tradesmen here display
Their capital and skill;
May ample profits all repay,
And their just views fulfil.

Here such facilities combine
To augment the means of gain;
Conveyance quick, intelligence
By telegraph and train.(1)

The mid-Victorian boom is still evident in the streets and market places of Banbury. In 1903 Thomas Ward Boss who had spent 78 years in the town calculated that since his boyhood sixty new houses had been built in the High Street.(2) Seven new dissenting chapels, two corn exchanges, a town hall and arrays of suburban villas witness to the prosperity of the 1850s and 60s, and a multitude of speeches and reports give an impression of increasing wealth. Throughout the 1850s and 60s Banbury was subjected to forces which were major influences on the national economy; improved communications, the growth of new manufacturing industries and the decline of the old textile trades, rural migration for which Banbury was both destination and entrepot, and the gradual rise of national markets for consumer goods. What happened to Banbury's economy in this period is thus of particular relevance to a study of the national economy.

(1) Elizabeth Hemus, Banbury - a Poem,1854. BFL Case E1,f.11a.
(2) T. W. Boss, Reminiscences of Old Banbury, 1903,p.27.

The population of Banbury rose from 8,793 in 1851 to 11,768 in 1871, growing by 16.4 per cent in the 1850s and by 14.9 per cent during the 60s, almost exactly the national rate of growth. The population of the Poor Law Union outside the town declined by 4.7 per cent in the 50s and by 2.4 per cent in the 60s,(1) one effect of which was a rise in the numbers of migrants in Banbury. The proportion of people born outside the town rose from 45.72 per cent in 1851 to 50.67 per cent in 1871. This was due in part to increased migration from the hinterland, particularly from adjacent parishes. The increase in the numbers of migrants from further afield was rather greater, from 16.59 to 19.60 per cent. ~~As in 1851~~ There were natives of every English county resident in Banbury in 1871, 39 from Devon, 37 from Kent, 58 from Lancashire, 36 from Lincolnshire, 72 from Wiltshire, and 257, or 2.20 per cent of the population, from London.(2)

Like the citizens of similar towns throughout Europe, Banburians believed that economic progress came on iron rails. Banbury's railways arrived relatively late, some twelve years after the London and Birmingham Railway, some twenty miles to the east, began to effect the town's trade. Banbury became the focus of much railway speculation in the 1840s. Amid many conflicting proposals two basic schemes emerged. One was for an extension of the Didcot-Oxford branch of the broad gauge Great Western Railway through Banbury and Fenny Compton to Rugby, where it would make contact with the narrow gauge London and Birmingham and Midland Counties lines. At Fenny Compton this route was to be joined by the Birmingham and Oxford Junction Railway, to give

(1) See Table Two.

(2) See Table Six.

direct access to the West Midlands. The other proposal was for a narrow gauge line from Tring on the London and Birmingham, through Banbury, to Worcester and Wolverhampton.(1) There was feverish railway activity in Banbury during 1844 and 1845, Robert Stephenson was seen surveying in the district in April and October 1844. A memorable meeting in July 1844 was attended by George and Robert Stephenson, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Charles Saunders, secretary of the Great Western.(2) On hearing that his agent was 'over head and ears engaged with railroads', Banbury's MP regretted that he could not vote for both the broad and the narrow gauge schemes.(3) Parliamentary sanction was given for the broad gauge to advance north of Oxford, and in 1848 the GWR secured control of the Birmingham and Oxford line. The narrow gauge schemes were consolidated into the Buckinghamshire Railway, a subsidiary of the newly formed London and North Western Railway, and the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway, a narrow gauge line which skirted the western edge of Banbury's hinterland.(4)

Public opinion in Banbury favoured the narrow gauge proposals. References to the London and Birmingham were cheered at the meeting in July 1844, and the Banbury Guardian argued for a narrow gauge route to the north.(5) Timothy Rhodes Cobb was a member of the management committee of the Buckinghamshire Railway,

(1) E. T. McDermot, The History of the Great Western Railway, 1964 edn., I, p.266. See Map Five.

(2) BG,25 April 1844;BG,11 July 1844;BG,7 Nov.1844;OH,13 July 1844

(3) B.Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents,1969,p.15.

(4) E. T. McDermot, op.cit., I, p.270.

(5) OH, 13 April 1844; BG, 30 May 1844.

and held conclaves with Samuel Carter, solicitor to the London and Birmingham, in the Reform Club. At a dinner in 1850, Edward Watkin, then secretary of the company, said that the completion of the line owed more to Cobb than to any man living, and an obituary some 30 years later recalled that Cobb was 'particularly active in the promotion of the Buckinghamshire Railway'.(1) Both Banbury banks supported the Buckinghamshire line, but no local representatives sat on the committee of the Birmingham and Oxford.(2)

Construction of the Oxford and Rugby route began at Port Meadow in August 1845, but Banburians soon grew restive at the slow progress of the line. Charles Saunders had to counter charges that the Great Western might abandon the route.(3) In May 1846 construction began at three points near Banbury, but the following summer the contractor ran into difficulties. Under-employed navvies played a boistrous part in the Banbury election in July 1847, and by the autumn the line 'presented a melancholy aspect of desolation'. In June 1848 the Revd. Thomas Mardon saved the sub-contractor from rioting navvies near Banbury bridge. The summer of 1848 was enlivened by great blastings of rock in the cutting north of Cropredy, four miles from Banbury, which drew many spectators. A newspaper commented:

> 'It was pleasing to reflect that on the very spot where two centuries earlier the conflicting armies of the Royalists and the Parliamentarians were engaged in mortal combat, a troup of men were now engaged in using gunpowder for a far

(1) B. Trinder, op.cit., p.16; BG, 21 Aug.1845; BG 15 Aug.1850; BG, 6 May 1875.

(2) BG, 21 Aug.1845.

(3) BG, 21 Aug.1845; BG 26 Mar.1846; BG, 9 April 1846; NH 4 April 1846; NH, 18 April 1846.

different and much nobler object - that of promoting a spread of commerce and speedy transit between the metropolis of England and the metropolis of the North'.(1)

For all this spectacular display, it was not until September 1850 that the Great Western was opened to Banbury, and not for another two years did trains run through Cropredy cutting to Birmingham.

The broad gauge was beaten to Banbury by the Buckinghamshire Railway which by 1846 was envisaged as a route from Bletchley, on the LNWR main line, to Oxford and Banbury, the two lines diverging west of Winslow.(2) Construction began near Bletchley in July 1846 and the line was marked out to Banbury in August 1847.(3) The directors of the company agreed in 1849 to proceed first with the Banbury line, suspending work on the route to Oxford, since the former was throughout potentially more remunerative.(4) In April 1849 the engineer Robert Benson Dockray surveyed the site for the station, and a year later he accompanied the directors on an experimental journey from Bletchley to Banbury. During April 1850 he twice took government inspectors along the line, and on 1 May the passenger service began. The first goods trains ran a fortnight later when the operating authorities were overwhelmed since colliery owners sent

(1) E.T.McDermot, op.cit.,vol.I,p.246;BG, 14 May 1846; BG,4 June 1846; BG, 29 Oct.1846;BG, 29 June 1846; BG, 31 May 1849; BG, 28 June 1849; BPL RC, p.256; NH, 6 Nov.1847.

(2) E.T.McDermot, op.cit., vol.I,p.246; Bill Simpson, The Banbury to Verney Junction Branch, 1978,pp.9-13.

(3) BG, 2 July 1846; BG, 26 Aug.1847.

(4) B.Simpson, op.cit., p.17.

over a hundred waggons on the first day.(1)

Four months later on Monday 2 September 1850 the first trains ran along the broad gauge route from Oxford, into a station which for over two years remained a temporary terminus. Services to Birmingham did not begin until 1 October 1852, after a contretemps the previous day when a special train carrying dignitaries, and drawn by the locomotive 'Lord of the Isles' which had been displayed in the Crystal Palace, collided six miles south of Banbury with a late-running mixed train.(2) The Great Western did not complete the Oxford and Rugby route north of Fenny Compton where an end-on junction was formed with the Birmingham and Oxford line. Nor was a third rail laid to enable narrow gauge trains from the Buckinghamshire line to continue their journeys north of Banbury. The connection between the LNWR and the Great Western was not installed until 1863, and was never used for long distance traffic. Nevertheless it seems that the LNWR maintained some hopes of developing traffic to the west of Banbury since it built a substantial engine shed, capable of holding eight locomotives, far more than ever operated on the line at any one time, and the passenger station remained a flimsy, temporary structure, where until 1877 locomotives had to be detached from their carriages before the latter could enter the platforms.(3)

(1) Michael Robbins, 'From R. B. Dockray's Diary', Journal of Transport History, VII, 1965,pp.7-8; BG, 26 April 1849; BG, 28 Mar.1850; BG, 4 April 1850; BG, 2 May 1850.

(2) E. T. McDermot, op.cit., vol.I, p.297; BG, 5 Sep.1850.

(3) E. T. McDermot, op.cit., vol.I, p.297; B. Simpson, op.cit., pp.13, 39-40,43; BG, 13 Sep.1877.

The Great Western line became an important long distance route, while the Buckinghamshire Railway was no more than a by-way, but for traffic to and from Banbury itself the two lines were competitive. The distance from Banbury to Paddington through Oxford was 86 1/4 miles, whereas from Banbury to Euston through Bletchley was only 78 miles. The fastest GWR expresses did not stop at Banbury. In 1855 there were eight services to Paddington, the fastest in 2hr.45min. There were four trains on the Buckinghamshire line, two with through coaches to Euston, one of which reached the capital in 2hr.35min. In 1863 there were five trains from Paddington to Birmingham and beyond stopping at Banbury, with two services provided by slip coaches off non-stop trains, the first of which began to serve Banbury in 1858. The fastest train did the journey in 1hr.55min. The LNWR service was little changed from that of 1855.(1) Banbury was not an important junction. There was agitation throughout the 1850s and 60s for an east-to-west line through the town, but when the two parts of this route were separately built neither proved to be of more than local significance. It was only after 1900 that Banbury became a junction of national importance and the GWR overcame the opposition of the LNWR for London traffic.(2)

'It will make quite a social revolution in the district, which until the opening of this line may be said to have been almost cut off from the world' wrote C. B. Dockray on the opening of the Buckinghamshire Railway.(3) Many agreed that the railway

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, 1855,1863;BG,2 Dec.1858.
(2) W. J. Scott, The Great Great Western 1889-1902,1972 edn.,p.55.
(3) Michael Robbins, op.cit., p.8.

brought important benefits to Banbury. At the beginning of 1851 the Banbury Guardian spoke of 'the advantages of the railways opened to Banbury ... so universally felt and admired', and cited the reduction of coal prices as one of them. In 1852 it was argued that the approach from the railway stations had become the main route into the town. 'In consequence of the railways', claimed Edward Cobb, 'the Oxford Road is no longer the chief entrance into Banbury. Now it is from the bridge ...' It was said that with existing market facilities Banbury could not 'swallow day after day and every day the heaps and heaps of goods that both railways pour into the town'. Fifteen years' satisfaction with the economic consequences of the railways were expressed by the ironmonger Richard Edmunds when in 1865 he argued for a railway to the west by declaring 'We want as many railways as we can get'.(1) It is difficult to quantify the effects of the railway. In 1869 it was estimated that the GWR took £29,000 in revenue at Banbury, of which £13,500 came from passenger traffic. When the GWR station master absconded, he took with him the takings from the three largest goods accounts, those of the Britannia Ironworks, Hunt Edmunds Brewery and J. and T. Davies, builders, which indicates how varied were the concerns which benefitted from the railway.(2)

By the mid-1850s six of Banbury's 25 coal merchants had offices in the railway yards, while seven still operated from the canal wharves. The railways did not deprive the canal of the carriage of Warwickshire coal, for which it was particularly

(1) BG,7 Nov.1850;BG,2 Jan.1851;BG,15 Jan.1852;NH,24 June 1865.

(2) BA,20 May 1860; BG,15 Feb.1866.

well suited, but coal from Cannock Chase and North Wales began to compete with that from traditional sources. Dividends on the Oxford Canal fell from 30 per cent in 1844 to 9 per cent in 1855, but traffic in bulk commodities remained buoyant, and until 1878 the company's dividend did not fall below 8 per cent. Flyboat services for sundries were maintained, although the Oxford market boat ceased to sail in 1852. Employment on the canal declined by only four between 1851 and 1871, and in 1879, 74 vessels were registered in Banbury under the 1877 Canal Boats Act. By 1862 steam boats were appearing regularly in the town, and recreational cruising had commenced. The canal remained a viable concern, important to Banbury as a carrier of bulk commodities and as a source of profit through the servicing of vessels carrying such cargoes as coal from Coventry to Newbury, plaster from Barrow-on-Soar to Thatcham, and hides from Birmingham to Reading.(1)

By 1850 stage coach operators realised that they could not withstand direct railway competition, and all of the services through Banbury ended when the railways opened, those to London ceasing in 1850 and those in the Birmingham direction in 1852. The last service to Banbury, a coach from Chipping Campden, was withdrawn when the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway opened in May 1853. All stage waggons had ceased to run by the mid-1850s.(2) The railways considerably affected the droving traffic. In 1852 a writer on the agriculture of Northamptonshire said of the Buckinghamshire Railway:

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories, passim; Charles Hadfield, The Canals of the East Midlands, 1966,p.214; Hugh Compton, The Oxford Canal, 1976, pp.116-117, 130-31; BA, 17 Sep.1863; BG, 23 Mar.1862; BG 19 June 1873.

(2) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; BG, 5 May 1853.

'Since the opening of these lines, the old mode of droving cattle and sheep to London has been nearly abandoned, and the surplus fatstock ... is now principally conveyed to Smithfield by railway'.

In 1865 a Herefordshire cattle dealer explained how he bought cattle in the Borderland and despatched them to Banbury market by rail through Gloucester and Swindon. It was suggested that because of the lack of a railway to the west, Moreton-in-Marsh might take this trade from Banbury.(1)

The railways increased the prosperity of Banbury as a market centre. In 1854 the opening of the Birmingham line was said to have been a great stimulus to the corn trade. In 1856 Thomas Draper claimed that 520 farmers and dealers drove into Banbury market every Thursday. In 1863 the vendors of the White Lion boasted 'Banbury market is one of the best in the kingdom and the town is rapidly increasing in size and importance'. In 1864 an ironmonger described Banbury as 'the principal market for the whole district around it' and explained that great quantities of grocers' goods were sent westwards from the town by carriers' carts.(2) The number of people employed in road transport in Banbury increased from 47 to 58 between 1851 and 1871, while the number of male employees at inns, most of whom cared for horses, remained stationary. Allowing for the undoubted decline of long distance traffic, these figures indicate a

(1) William Bearn, 'On the Farming of Northamptonshire', JRASE, XIII, 1852,p.47; Clare Sewell Read, 'On the Agriculture of Oxfordshire',JRASE, XV, 1854,p.190; BG, 23 June 1853;BG 10 Mar.1864.

(2) BPL, PC VIII, p.27; BG, 22 Oct.1863; BG, 10 Mar.1864; NH, 24 June 1865.

considerable increase in local journeys. In the same period the numbers of coach-makers increased from 13 to 24, and of wheelwrights from 13 to 17, which suggests a buoyant demand for vehicles.(1)

Similar conclusions emerge from analysis of the carrying trade. The number of carriers serving Banbury declined from 192 to 167 between 1851 and 1861, and the total of weekly journeys fell from 437 to 370. This was due largely to the cessation of services which duplicated the railway, to such places as Hampton Poyle and Wolvercote in the Oxford direction, Whitnash and Bishop's Itchington to the north, and Tingewick and Turweston in the Buckingham direction. The number of weekly visits from Brackley carriers fell from eleven to four, of Buckingham carriers from six to two, and of those from Cropredy from 13 to six. Carrying from Shipston-on-Stour and Stowe-on-the-Wold ceased, which gave some credence to the demands of those who sought a railway to the west in order to consolidate the superiority of Banbury market. While some villages lost their services, carriers began to visit Banbury from places like Ladbrook, Ardley, Cherrington and Napton which had not been served in the 1840s.(2) It was acknowledged in 1866 that the number of carriers visiting Banbury had declined since the opening of the railways, but during the sixties the number of carriers remained stable, while the total of weekly journeys increased, exceeding 400 once more by 1871. A round figure of 400 weekly attendances was quoted several times in the mid-60s. The carriers were seen as the symbols of

(1) See Tables Three and Nine.

(2) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

Banbury's prosperity. In 1860 the Banbury Advertiser estimated that 167 carriers made 393 visits a week to Banbury and asked 'Is any other little town so visited?'.(1) In 1865 Sir Charles Douglas was praised because 'he has helped ... village carriers who tend so much to the prosperity of this town'. Banbury had many more carriers' services than some county towns, like Oxford, Newcastle upon Tyne and Shrewsbury, and only a few less than major centres like Nottingham, Leicester and Reading.(2) Carriers brought in agricultural, more particularly dairy and horticultural products to shopkeepers, and on their return conveyed goods bought on behalf of customers from Banbury retailers. They also conveyed passengers, and in 1869 it was calculated that 166 carriers, some with two vehicles, could not have brought less than a thousand people to Banbury fair. The importance of the carriers was ironically symbolised in 1863 when Thomas Draper, the mayor, was attacked by a cow in High Street on market day, but found his escape impeded because 'as usual, the left hand side was blocked with carriers' carts'.(3)

The railways apart, the most dramatic change in Banbury's economy in the 1850s and 60s was the rapid growth of the engineering industry, which in 1851 had employed only about 90 men, a mere 2.18 per cent of the employed population, but which in 1871 gave work to more than 500, almost ten per cent of the town's labour force.(4) This figure is an under-estimate since some

(1) BG,4 Jan.1866; BA,1 Nov.1860;NH,24 June 1865;BPL,PC IX,p.192.

(2) Alan Everitt, 'Country Carriers in the Nineteenth Century', Journal of Transport History,New Ser.III,1976,pp.179-202.

(3) BA,21 Oct.1869; BG,15 Oct.1863.

(4) Tables Three and Nine.

general labourers, carpenters and painters would have been employed in the engineering works. It would be easy to explain the rise of agricultural engineering in simple geographical terms. Banbury stood in a prosperous agricultural region, and had good communications with the coal and iron producing districts. A speaker at a railway dinner in 1850 declared that Banbury 'lay between the immense iron district on the north west side, and a large agricultural district on the other, so that Banbury would become a species of entrepot by its natural position'.(1) This is exactly what did happen. Banbury had always sent farm produce to Birmingham and the Black Country, and from 1850 the reverse traffic in coke and iron was increased, and these materials were processed in Banbury into products useful to farmers. While the railways may have improved the supplies of such materials, it was possible to bring them to the town cheaply by canal long before 1850 and one works received coke, pig iron and sand by water throughout the nineteenth century.(2) Of more importance was the ability of the railways to transport machines to distant markets in Britain and to the docks. The growth of engineering was shaped by the zeal of an entrepreneur whose horizons were not bounded by the limits of Banbury's hinterland. It demonstrates the social and economic forces which were affecting market towns throughout western Europe as the cencepts of the entrepreneurs of the Industrial Revolution were extended from the coalfields to rural districts.

When Bernhard Samuelson gave a dinner for the employees of

(1) BG, 15 Aug.1850.

(2) G. C. J. Hartland, 'The Britannia Works from Living Memory', C & CH, IV, 1971, p.194.

the newly-named Britannia Ironworks in 1849 they numbered only 27.(1) Within a decade the labour force was expanded, their productivity was increased through the use of steam power, and the range of products was extended. Samuelson had a commercial rather than an engineering background, and the organisation of the factory was left to others. From 1849 until 1854 it was managed by his brother Alexander who had previously worked for a locomotive-building firm in Lancashire, Nasmyth Gaskell and Co. and Boulton & Watt, before joining Bernhard Samuelson at Tours. He was succeeded by John Shaw, who was followed from 1862 until 1874 by Daniel Pidgeon, who patented eight new reaping and mowing machines while in Banbury. He became a junior partner in the company in 1865.(2) Samuelson sought to utilise foreign, particularly American technology, and exhibited and won prizes for his machines on the continent and in the furthest reaches of the English speaking world.

In 1850 Samuelson won prizes with a Gardner turnip cutter and for a churn made according to a patent of Charles Anthony of Pittsburg at the Royal Show, and at exhibitions in Lancashire, Lincolnshire and the Highlands.(3) He displayed several machines in the Crystal Palace, and won a prize for a turnip cutter, but his greatest achievement at the Great Exhibition was to gain a

(1) The obituary of the Rt. Hon. Sir Bernhard Samuelson, Bt., Journal of the Iron and Steel Institute, I, 1905,p.504, gives the total as 27 at the time of takeover; BG,27 Sep.1849.

(2) Archie Potts, 'Alexander Samuelson: A Victorian Engineer', C & CH, II, 1965,p.193; Archie Potts, 'Daniel Pidgeon and the Britannia Works', C & CH, IV, 1968,pp.58-59.

(3) JRASE, XI, 1850, pp.464,491-92; BG, 2 Nov.1850.

licence to manufacture the McCormick reaper. In October 1851 McCormick's British agents referred to 'the numerous machines which Mr. Samuelson our manufacturer is constructing for every part of the country'.(1) The great agriculturalist Philip Pusey described the reaper as 'the most important addition to farming machinery since the threshing machine took the place of the flail' and compared it with the spinning jenny and the power loom.(2) The inventor was a farmer's son from Rockbridge County, Virginia. One of the most consistent images of Banbury which remained in the minds of nineteenth century visitors was that of rows of brightly painted reapers loaded on to railway waggons and awaiting despatch.(3) The McCormick reaper was demonstrated in Banbury and exhibited at the Royal Show in 1852. The main agents for its production in Britain were Messrs. Burgess and Key, and Samuelson seems to have manufactured the machine on their behalf, although they themselves made it and showed their models in competition with his.(4) The turnip cutter usually won its class at the Royal Show in the 1850s, Samuelson also made a digging machine, mowing machines, chaff and linseed cutters and an oilcake breaker, and non-agricultural products included an American patent washing machine, lawn mowers, rollers and rustic garden seats.(5)

(1) JRASE, XII,1851,p.633;BG,22 May 1851;BG,4Sep.1851;BG,30 Oct. 1851; BG, 2 Sep.1852.

(2) JRASE, XII, 1851, pp.160,611.

(3) M. K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1961,p.57.

(4) BG,1 July 1852;BG,29 Sep.1852; BG,24 Feb.1853;BG,24 Mar.1853; JRASE,XIV,1853,pp.359,363;Illustrated London News,10 Dec.1853,p.490.

(5) JRASE, XV,1854,p.373;JRASE,XVI,1855,pp.520-21,526;JRASE,XVIII, 1857,p.442;JRASE,XIX,1859,pp.328-29,341;Samuelson Trade Leaflets, ORO 315.

The Britannia Works was divided into two halves. At Gardner's original workshops on the south side of Fish Street was a two cylinder steam engine, powering machining shops, woodworkers' saw and blacksmiths' hearths. The lower works between Upper Windsor Street and the canal, built on land purchased from Thomas Draper, consisted of two cupola furnaces, with associated workshops and yards where assembled machines were painted. A 2 ft. gauge tramway sanctioned in 1870 linked the two sections, and ran on to the works depot adjoining the railway where incoming timber was stored, and finished implements loaded on to waggons.(1)

In 1859 the works produced 18,000 implements, about a quarter of which were turnip cutters. Samuelson commenced production in 1858 of another American patent reaper designed by Seymour and Morgan, of Brockport, New York, which seems to have been named the Patent Britannia Self-Raking Reaping Machine or the Banbury Reaper. It was extensively advertised in 1859 at a price of £32.10.0d. at the factory, and its American reputation was much publicised.(2) The reaper won respects at trials throughout Britain, particularly in the North East, and was the basis for the foundry's prosperity in the 1860s, although other designs were also manufactured. In 1872 the foundry could make 8,000 reapers a year. Prizes were won at Berlin in 1868, and at

(1) 'An Early Description of the Britannia Works', C & CH, IV, 1965,pp.60-61; G. C. J. Hartland, 'The Britannia Works from Living Memory', C & CH, IV, 1971,pp.194-95; BA, 10 Feb.1872; Archie Potts, 'Ernest Samuelson and the Britannia Works', C & CH, IV, 12, 1971, pp.187-90.

(2) ORO,315, Samuelson Trade Leaflets; BG, 23 Sep.1858; BG, 6 Jan.1859; BG, 7 April 1859; BG, 22 April 1859; BG, 23 June 1859.

major French competitions in 1870 and 1876. Mowing machines gained awards at Quimper in Britanny, Franeker in Friesland and Canterbury, New Zealand.(1) A visitor remarked that Banbury's chief trades were 'the manufacture of agricultural implements and steam engines, and ... the Banbury reapers and mowers have long taken a leading position', and an Irish journalist called the mowing machine made by Samuelson 'the greatest time and labour saving mechanical contrivance which the current century has dawned on'.(2)

The publicity for the Banbury reaper in 1858-59 demonstrates the difference between the Britannia works and the millwrights' shops and small foundries from which engineering in Banbury had sprung. The Lampitts and Rileys built machines skillfully for specific purposes. Samuelson submitted his workers to the disciplines of mass production. Exporters and colonial farmers were assured that the reaper's driving mechanism was a complete unit which could be assembled by unskilled labour.(3) The Britannia works brought to Banbury the concepts of the American as well as the British Industrial Revolution. The labour force grew steadily between 1850 and 1871, although there were considerable seasonal variations. In September 1852 over 100 were

(1) Journal of the Iron and Steel Institute, I, 1905,p.504; JRASE, XXII, 1861,p.457; JRASE 2nd Ser.,I,1865,pp.38,93; BG, 16 July 1868; BG,21 July 1870; BG, 20 July 1876; BG, 9 July 1863; BG,11 May 1876; BG,17 May 1877; BG,7 June 1877; BG, 25 Jan.1877.

(2) BG,13 Jan.1876; quoting The Irish Farmer.

(3) ORO,315, Samuelson Trade Leaflets; BG,23 June 1859.

regularly employed, but the total sometimes exceeded 200. In May 1854 there were 230 workmen, and by 1859 over 300 were in regular employment. Samuelson claimed in 1865 that 400 were employed, and that 113 were taken on between Easter and July for the summer trade. In January 1871 Daniel Pidgeon said that 500 had been employed during Christmas week, an unusually large number for that season.(1) It was acknowledged that wages at the Britannia works were high by local standards, and that the conditions of work were superior to those elsewhere. In 1858 a labourer received about a pound a week, sometimes as little as 12s., and sometimes as much as £1.2s.0d. Early in 1859 Samuelson said the annual pay roll was £15,000, and the average wage £2.2s.0d., the usual wages of labourers, included in the general average, being 15s.0d. By the end of the year the annual bill was almost £20,000. In 1868 Samuelson said that his heart bled to see men on ten or eleven shillings a week, which government reports show to have been common at this time in the Oxfordshire countryside.(2)

The discipline at the foundry introduced new concepts into Banbury society. A visitor commented in 1859:

> 'everything is orderly and systematic, from the moment the workman enters the premises on Monday morning and sees his 'number' entered by the doorkeeper, up to mid-day on Saturday, when the paymaster, by an excellent plan, pays the wages to all employees in less than five minutes'.

(1) BG,2 Sep.1852; BG, 25 May 1854; BG, 6 Oct.1859; BG, 6 July 1865; BG, 21 July 1870; BG, 12 Jan.1871.

(2) BA, 23 Sep.1858; BA, 6 Jan.1859; BG, 6 Oct.1859; BG, 29 Oct.1868

In 1871 two 'engineer's timekeepers' were recorded on the 1871 census in Banbury. The notion that time was a commodity to be kept and measured would have been alien in the town before 1850. As late as 1873 Banburians complained of the steam whistles which summoned employees to the engineering works.(1) Samuelson was not simply an innovating entrepreneur in the tradition of Arkwright and Wedgwood, but a paternalist who cultivated loyalty and a sense of cohesion among his workpeople. He declared in 1850, 'I regard the whole of us as fellow workers, and I shall always be glad to do anything to oblige you', and coupled a toast to 'the progress of Knowledge and Liberty throughout the world' with the motto, 'The Britannia Ironworks expects every member to do his duty'. He advocated class mixing, declaring the objects of treats for workmen to be:

> 'to promote that fusion of classes, which ... is "looming in the future". If this little entertainment has contributed in the least to take off the rough edges which have prevented us from dovetailing into each other, it will afford me the greatest possible satisfaction'.(2)

Subsequently he provided recreational and educational facilities for his employees on a scale quite new to Banbury.(3) In 1871

(1) 'An Early Description of the Britannia Works', C & CH, IV 4,1965,p.60; BG, 27 Mar.1873; 1871 Census RG 10.

(2) BG, 24 Jan.1850; BG, 2 Sep.1852.

(3) See below p.319-20.

Samuelson conceded a nine hour day, reducing the working week from 60 to 55 1/4 hours. The decision was announced by Daniel Pidgeon to a meeting of workmen who later processed to Samuelson's house at Bodicote as a mark of thanks.(1)

Samuelson's political opponents inadvertently fostered a sense of identity among the engineers by blaming the foundrymen for every species of social disorder. Work at the foundry gave men a common experience which hatters, locksmiths or tailors did not have. A third of the foundry men came from outside the district, and many of those locally born were young. It was easy to blame on foundrymen things which were normally blamed on immigrants or the young. Four men who drove a horse to death while going to Edgehill on the day following a works excursion there in 1858 were reprimanded in the press for disloyalty to their employer, and dubbed 'four drunken foundrymen'. In 1861 there were complaints that foundrymen insulted women in Church Lane. In 1866 it was said that youths from the works jostled respectable people in the streets at night, and sang ribald songs which disturbed the congregation at St. Mary's church.(2) Such youths could have been called residents of the Cherwell area, former pupils of the National Schools or frequenters of a particular public house. That they were called 'foundrymen' shows how prominent was the Britannia Works in the local consciousness.

Less than half of those employed in engineering in Banbury were born in Banbury, and only just over 20 per cent in the

(1) BA,2 Nov.1871; BG, 2 Nov.1871.

(2) BA,23 Sep.1858;BH,11 April 1861;BH,2 May 1861;BG,18 Jan.1866.

hinterland. About a third of the engineering workers had been born at a considerable distance, and among the highly skilled this proportion was much greater. Among those described as 'engineers', 61.6 per cent were from outside the hinterland, and 43.6 per cent of the fitters and 43.3 per cent of the moulders came from similar distances.(1) Only 14.2 per cent of the unskilled were born outside the hinterland, and nearly 30 per cent had come to the town from nearby villages. Many workers had doubtless been recruited from other trades. One ironworks labourer had previously been a tailor, and a coachmaker had become a 'painter at the works'. Many of the moulders and fitters in Banbury were born or had children born in well-known engineering centres. The railway towns may have served as staging posts for migrant engineers. Two moulders were born near Wolverton, and four skilled workers in the vicinity of Swindon. An engine fitter aged 31 in 1871 was living in Grove Street and working for Barrows and Stewart. He was born at Bedlington, Northumberland, site of the ironwork where the Birkinshaw rail was invented and birthplace of Sir Daniel Gooch. His wife was born at Patricroft Lancashire, where the Nasmyth steam hammer was made. His son aged seven was born at Swindon, home of the Great Western engineering works. His sons of four and two were born in Manchester, the latter at Gorton, site of the works of Beyer Peacock & Co. and of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincoln Railway.(2)

(1) PRO, RG 10, 1871 Census.

(2) PRO, RG 10,1871 Census.

The other engineering works in Banbury employed more than twice as many people in 1871 as the entire local engineering industry in 1851. Second in order of size was the works of Barrows and Carmichael, developed from the millwrighting business of J. E. Kirby, who began to make steam engines and threshing machines in North Bar in the late 1850s. About 1861 he moved to the Cherwell area, and took into partnership Thomas Barrows, a 28 year old native of Birmingham. Shortly afterwards he retired, and Barrows took as his partner a certain John Carmichael, who died in 1868 and was succeeded by a Scot, William Stewart. Barrows encouraged steam ploughing by offering prizes at agricultural shows for crops sown on land thus cultivated. By 1870 the company employed about 200 people.(1) Charles and John Lampitt's Vulcan Foundry employed about 50, and produced steam engines and other machines of great ingenuity, the Lampitt geared engine being particularly famous.(2)

The craft tradition of the smaller engineering concerns throws into sharper relief the exceptional nature of the Britannia Works, mass producing standardised products with interchangeable parts for an international market, and utilising foreign technology in their design. But Samuelson's capital was potentially as mobile as his search for profitable innovations was wide-ranging. He invested in Banbury only because political circumstances

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories: BG, 22 April 1859; BG 12 July 1860; BG,5 Nov.1868; BG,21 July 1870; BH,16 Oct.1862; BA, 3 Jan.1868;BA,6 Aug.1868;JRASE, XXIV,1863,p.497;JRASE, 2nd Ser.VII, 1871,p.485; R. H. Clark, The Development of the English Traction Engine, 1960,pp.38-40.

(2) R. H. Clark, op.cit., pp.21-23,96-98.

made it prudent to transfer his capital from Tours to the English Midlands. Within five years he had other interests. In 1853 while attending the Cleveland Agricultural Show, he was introduced to one of the pioneers of the local iron trade by C. B. Dockray, engineer of the Buckinghamshire Railway, whom he would certainly have met in Banbury. He built two blast furnaces at South Bank, Middlesborough in 1854, and enlarged his concerns until by 1870 he was producing 3,000 tons of pig iron a week. In that year he commenced building the Britannia Ironworks, Middlesborough, a forge with a capacity of 1,400 tons of puddled iron a week which he sold in 1879. He lost over £25,000 in the early 1870s in an attempt to make steel by the Siemens-Martin process at the North Yorkshire Ironworks, South Stockton.(1) It is doubtful whether Cleveland iron was used at the Britannia Works, since most of the pig iron arrived by canal, probably from South Staffordshire. Samuelson suggested that blast furnaces might be built to smelt local ores in Banbury if coal could be obtained from South Wales.(2)

One consequence of the growth of engineering was that steam power became readily available in Banbury. In 1857 it was estimated that there were 18 steam engines working within a mile of the town centre. Those at the Britannia Works, Hunt Edmunds Brewery, Baughen's woollen mills, and a wood-turning factory can readily be identified, but the number which cannot be located is impressive. Steam power was evidently being used by several quite small concerns.(3)

(1) Journal of the Iron and Steel Institute, I,1905,pp.504-06.

(2) BG,18 Feb.1864; NH,24 June 1865.

(3) BG,19 Feb.1857.

The textile industry, already in decline in 1851, contracted further during the next two decades. By 1871 the number of plush weavers was less than half that of 1851, and the total employed in textiles went down from 195, or 4.73 per cent of the working population, to 102, or 1.97 per cent. Fifty two people were engaged in plush weaving, all of whom must have worked for William Cubitt, once traveller for Gilletts, who had 61 employees.(1) In 1852, 88 plush weavers at Baughens went on strike following a 25 per cent reduction in piece work rates. The average wage of a weaver was then 12s. a week, of which a quarter was deducted for shop rent, a level approximating to that of an Oxfordshire farm labourer, and less than could be obtained for menial labouring tasks at the foundries. The dispute lasted for over ten weeks. A co-operative was formed but soon collapsed.(2) In 1857 the brothers Baughen became bankrupt after an explosion caused by frozen pipes at the former Cobb girth factory, which Thomas Baughen had taken over for spinning wool. Richard Baughen resigned as mayor, and Thomas as town councillor. The factory stood empty until 1871(3). The weavers, once the aristocrats of Banbury's working class, retained some sense of corporate identity as their trade declined. They were the only occupational group to appear in the Reform Procession in November 1866. The restrictions which had sustained the high status of the weavers

(1) Tables Three and Nine.

(2) BG,29 Jan.1852; BG,26 Feb.1852; BPL PC XI, p.104.

(3) BA,10 Sep.1857; George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949,p.101.

had disappeared by 1871. Several weavers combined making plush with weaving worsted or girth, and in Foundry Square lived a woman plush weaver. The trade was obviously no longer worth entering or protecting.(1)

The numbers employed in brewing and malting increased from 50 to 79 between 1851 and 1871, due principally to the enlargement of Hunt Edmunds' premises in Bridge Street. Austin's brewery in North Bar was taken over by J. N. Harman in 1850, who, with his partner W. A. Bryden operated it until the early 1870s when it was sold to Messrs. Dunnell. The brewing interests of William Barrett, clerk at Gilletts Bank, were taken over on his retirement about 1860 by his son. His Britannia Brewery in Newland was offered for sale in 1870. T. H. Wyatt's brewery in Bridge Street became the Banbury Brewery Co. in 1861, and in 1869 won a gold medal in Amsterdam for a brown stout which was claimed to be a favourite beverage on the continent. All three of these concerns were subsequently taken over by Hunt Edmunds. A Reform document in 1866 which sought to define Banbury's working class, put the breweries second only to the iron foundries as sources of employment.(2)

The building trade in the 1850s and 60s grew at a rate which reflects the large numbers of new houses, shops and public buildings erected in the period. The number employed increased from 184 in 1851 to 364 in 1871, although some of the 159 carpenters included in the latter figure probably worked in the foundries. The number making and selling building materials

(1) BPL PC IX,pp.256,269;'Weaving in the 1890s',C & CH,III,11,pp. 207-09.

(2) Anon, Hunt Edmunds and Co.1896-1946,1946,pp.5-8; BG, 24 July 1856;BG,25 Sep.1856;BG,31 Aug.1865;BG 28 July 1870;BG 31 Oct. 1861;BA,25 Nov.1869;BPL PC IX, p.250.

increased from 45 to 62, and the total building labour force rose from 5.55 to 8.2 per cent of the working population. There were several quite large firms in Banbury. Albert Kimberley, a building contractor who had his own saw mill and brickworks, employed 90 men and five boys. Thomas and Stephen Orchard employed 40 men and three boys in 1871. J. & T. Davies employed 61 in 1861. Kimberley gave treats to his workmen modelled on those provided by Samuelson. In 1866, 40 went to tea at Edgehill, and the employees were entertained when his son was married in 1875.(1)

The increased size of businesses in the 1850s and 60s encouraged the growth of trades unions. The local branch (No.192) of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was formed at the Wheatsheaf in 1859 with 15 members. Relative to the size of the skilled labour force at the foundries its growth was slow. There were 31 members in 1862, and 97 in 1880, rather less than a fifth of the engineers in Banbury.(2) Bernhard Samuelson was notoriously 'no great friend to Trades Unionism'. In 1859 he complimented his employees that 'when the whole of England was agitated by the strike of the Amalgamated Engineers, you, my friends, remained staunch to your employer'. In 1867 he set down his suspicions of the power of union leaders, displayed the previous year in a strike at Beyer Peacock's in Manchester, where some of his own employees had once worked.(3) When the much-publicised

(1) Information on sizes of firms from PRO,1861 Census RG 9, and 1871 Census RG 10; BG 9 Aug.1866;BG,23 Sep.1875.

(2) United Kingdom First Annual Trades' Union Directory, 1861, pp.9-10; J. R. Hodgkins, Over the Hills to Glory,1979,p.47.

(3) Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, 1965,pp.148-49,171-72; BA, 6 Jan.1859; B. Samuelson - the Rt. Hon. Lord R. Montague, 26 Nov.1867, ORO 315, Box 80, Bundle M.

nine hour day was conceded in 1871, trades unions were given no share of the credit for it. Samuelson nevertheless derived some support from the trades unionists of the Reform League, and during the 1874 election promised to vote for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.(1)

Printing was the most strongly unionised trade in Banbury. Employment in the industry increased from 26 to 38 between 1851 and 1871, all of whom worked in small offices of not more than five or six workers. The Banbury Typographical Association may have dated from as early as 1849. By 1861 its club house was at the Banbury Guardian office, but the following year the printers amalgamated with the bookbinders, and to have used the latter's club house, the Jolly Weavers.(2) Unions were also active in the building trade. In 1864 builders agreed to allow their workers to stop at four instead of five o'clock on Saturdays and 5.30 instead of 6.0 p.m. on other days, in return for a reduction of the breakfast break to half an hour. In 1872 when the Banbury branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was founded, builders struck over the implementation of a reduction of the working week from 59 to 56½ hours, and in another strike in 1873 the union achieved a farthing an hour increase in wages.(3) It would be wrong to over-estimate the influence of unions in mid-Victorian Banbury. The carpenters and engineers held joint dinners in the 1870s, apparently because neither union on its own could muster sufficient

(1) BG,2 Nov.1871; R. Harrison, op.cit., pp.171-72;BA,5 Feb.1874.

(2) United Kingdom First Annual Trades' Union Directory, 1871,p.9; J. R. Hodgkins, op.cit., pp.50-51.

(3) BA,11 Aug.1864;BA,11 Jan.1872;BA,18 May,1873.

to make up a worthwhile party. Nevertheless in building, engineering and printing, where labour was skilled, mobile and able to pressurise employers during short-term crises of production, unions were influential.

The numbers employed in the major manufacturing industries in Banbury remained a small proportion of the total labour force. Less than seven hundred worked in engineering, weaving and brewing, while 601 were directly employed in retailing, and 843 in small scale crafts.(1) The proportion in retailing increased from 10.71 to 11.58 per cent of the working population between 1851 and 1871. Many shopkeepers rebuilt their premises in this period. While the population of the town was rising, and the hinterland was prospering, the numbers of shops remained stable. The number of bakers increased from 27 to 28, while the number of grocers fell from 19 to 16, and of ironmongers from 14 to 12. Only the drapers increased significantly in numbers, from 16 in 1851 to 23 in 1871. The numbers employed in many shops increased. On average each shop in the major trades employed one more person in 1871 than in 1851, but this increase was concentrated in shops which were already quite large.(2) Joseph Hicks, linen draper employed nine; John Mawle, ironmonger, eleven men and three boys, and Austen and Payne, grocers, eight. Some shopkeepers by 1871 lived in the suburbs, but maintained residential accommodation for their workers above their shops, supervised by a housekeeper or senior employee. John Harlock, linen draper, lived in St. John's Road, but over his shop at

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; Tables Three and Nine.
(2) PRO, RG 10 1871 Census enumerators' returns.

3 Parsons Street, lived three shopwomen and two shopmen in the charge of a housekeeper. Thomas Coleman, grocer, who employed 14, lived in West Bar, but three employees lived over his shop at 56 Parson's Street with the family of William Green his traveller. Others still lived in the manner to which retailers had long been accustomed. Over his shop in High Street, Arthur Adams, draper, accommodated with his family two male assistants, three apprentices and eight female employees, as well as two domestic servants.

Few of Banbury's major shops were established family businesses which continued in the same ownership from generation to generation. The shops of only six of the sixteen drapers and six of the nineteen grocers listed in the directory for 1851 were owned by the same families 20 years later. Many grocers and drapers came to Banbury from distant places. In 1871, 18 drapers occupied prime sites in Bridge Street, High Street, Market Place and Parson's Street. Four were born in Banbury, four in the hinterland, and ten in such distant places as Ridgemount (Beds.), Leicester and Havering (Essex). Of thirteen grocers in the same area, four were born in Banbury, three in the hinterland and the remainder in Birmingham, Guildford, Baldock, Bath and Durham. Similar patterns of movement can be observed among shopworkers. Arthur Adams's drapery staff came from as far afield as Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Cornwall. William Cowper the draper had employees from Norfolk, Brighton and Portsmouth. Retailers employed growing numbers of specialist workers. Most of the large shops had a clerk, a traveller and several apprentices, while mechanics were employed by ironmongers and milliners by drapers. Women were increasingly employed in

shops. Only eighteen worked in the retail trade in 1851, most of them the widows of tradesmen continuing their husbands' businesses. By 1871, 77 women were working in Banbury shops, including 29 employed by drapers, ten by bakers, five by grocers and three by butchers.

The most significant feature of retailing by 1871 was the growing number of shops selling articles manufactured outside the town. Ready-made clothes shops were first listed in directories in 1845, but until 1855 there were never more than three of them. There were ten by 1861. Boot and shoe warehouses, and furniture warehouses began to compete with the local shoemakers and cabinet makers. The traditional small scale crafts declined during the 1850s and 60s, the number employed falling from 670 to 843, or from 21.09 to 16.24 per cent of the working population. The fall affected every section except for the woodworkers whose numbers increased from 96 to 138 largely owing to increases among the wheelwrights and coachmakers, and the growth of carving and gilding. Shoemaking expanded during the 50s until it employed 182 people in 1861,(1) but only 135 were employed in 1871. Some shoemakers had quite large establishments. William Shearsby employed nine men and four women, and Amelia Dumbleton had 13 employees, but there were no moves in Banbury, as there were in Northamptonshire, towards the establishment of a factory system of production. The reduction in the numbers involved in making clothing was more marked. The number of tailors fell from 107 to 82 between 1851 and 1871, of female dressmakers from 211 to 204, and of milliners from 56 to 37. A

(1) PRO, RG 9, 1861 Census enumerators' returns.

rise of 12 in the number of printers, and the growth of photography were responsible for a slight rise in the numbers engaged in the fine crafts.(1)

The progress of the early closing movement in Banbury in the 1850s and 60s suggests that the masochistic competitiveness of earlier years was slowly mellowing. In 1852 the grocers began to shut at 8.0 p.m. each evening, and in the winter of 1856-57 shoemakers and leather sellers agreed to stop work at 7.0 p.m. In 1860 ironmongers and booksellers agreed to close early in winter, and the Banbury Advertiser remarked that few shops remained open after 7.0 pm. In 1864 the town's two leading grocers extended early closing to Saturday nights, shutting at 9.0 p.m. from November to February. At Christmas 1867 it was still worth remarking that most shops in Banbury closed by 7.0 p.m. in mid-week. In 1868 and 1869 traders were petitioned to close their shops at 2.0 p.m. on the Tuesdays of the Mechanics' Institute fete, and Tuesday became a regular early closing day from 25 April 1871, when most shops began to shut at 4.0 p.m. Boxing Day 1870 was observed as a holiday at the request of the mayor, and the inauguration of Bank Holidays in 1871 was in part a recognition of what was gradually becoming an established practice.(2)

The growth of a co-operative retail society in the late 1860s provides insights into the nature of retail trading in

(1) See Tables Three and Nine.

(2) BA,22 Jan.1857; BA,13 Nov.1856;BA,13 Sep.1860;BA,9 Dec.1867; BA,14 Mar.1872;BG,2 Sep.1852;BG,10 Nov.1864;BG,27 Aug.1868;BG 13 April 1871; BPL PC X, pp.9-10.

Banbury and into class relationships. The members of the weavers' co-operative formed in 1852 ran a retail store in Butchers' Row but it soon failed. At Christmas 1865 a beef club, largely formed of temperance activitists, was so successful that a meeting was called on 18 April 1866 to consider setting up a co-operative society. Fifty members joined the Society and on 7 June 1866 trading began, with volunteer assistants, from a lean-to building adjoining the Leathern Bottle. In spite of opposition from shopkeepers, the Society flourished and took £395 in its first year. A full-time assistant was engaged, and in November 1868 a new shop was opened on a freehold site in Broad Street. By June 1869 the Society had over 600 members. In the 1870s the movement became the way of life of many of Banbury's labour aristocracy. The movement was closely allied with temperance organisations, but while in the latter working men had worked closely with the middle classes, by setting up co-operative stores they were challenging the very way of life of the traditional shopkeepers.(1)

The antipathy with which shopkeepers regarded the Co-operative Society, and the tenacity with which they adhered to late night opening on Saturdays, indicates the importance which they attached to cash paying or short credit working class customers. They also faced competition from hawkers. Nothing is known of the traders at Banbury's retail market. There were no serious attempts to force them into a market hall, perhaps because such

(1) W. H. Lickorish, Our Jubilee Story or Fifty Years of Co-operation in Banbury and the Neighbourhood, 1916, passim; F. Lamb, A brief history of the Banbury Co-operative Industrial Society from its commencement down to the end of the June Quarter 1887, 1887, passim; BG,12 Nov.1868; BA,17 June 1869.

attempts had been successfully resisted in towns like Bridgnorth. A Saturday market, particularly for fish and vegetables, grew up in the 1850s from an informal gathering of traders in the undercroft of the old town hall on Saturday evenings. They were warned by magistrates in 1851 that although they provided 'a great accommodation to the working class', they would be moved if they caused disturbances or traded after 10.0 p.m. Samuelson was given credit in 1859 for the establishment of the market.(1) There were 47 hawkers in Banbury in 1871. Some of them, including a group of ten staying at the Wheatsheaf were Irish, and others were natives of Stockport, Cheerness and America. In June 1860 itinerant besom makers were encamped in Crouch Lane. In May 1864 a cart ran over a small girl, whose parents, residents in Poplar, were travellers with 'one of those large vans which serve the purpose of a peripatetic store, where you can buy anything from a hearth rug to an armchair, which also serve as domicile and dormitory'.(2) Pottery, haberdashery and cutlery were the goods most commonly sold by hawkers. At the Michaelmas Fair they traded in such diverse items as bear grease, concertinas, religious tracts, the works of the elder Dumas, pickled salmon and gingerbread.(3)

The polarisation of local society in the 1850s continued to be exemplified by the two principal banks. In Banbury itself Cobbs Bank remained dominant, through its involvement with the

(1) NH,14 June 1851; BG,10 Feb.1859.

(2) BA,28 June 1860;BA,5 May 1864;BG,5 May 1864;Tables Three and Nine.

(3) BG,20 Oct.1870;BG,16 Oct.1862;BG,21 Oct.1858;BA,27 Oct. 1864; BA,29 Oct.1868;BA,20 Oct.1870.

Britannia Works, the Buckinghamshire Railway, the development of Grimsbury and the varied speculations of Thomas Draper. Gilletts encountered difficulties in the 1850s, partially caused by the subvention of the unsuccessful engineering concerns of John Gillett of Brailes.(1) On two occasions rivalry between the banks and their political supporters emerged into open conflict. In 1851 under the sponsorship of Cobbs Bank, a Freehold Land Society was formed to develop land in Grimsbury. At the same time a Banbury Permanent Benefit Building Society, with J. A. Gillett and A. R. Tawney among its trustees and a Conservative board of directors, was established. Protestations by adherents of both that their organisations were non-political were no more than confessions that they exemplified the polarisation of local society.(2)

Of greater moment was the rivalry between two schemes to build corn exchanges. In October 1856 a meeting attended largely by Conservatives, with Charles Gillett in the chair, sought support for an exchange in Cornhill. Newspapers soon warned against rivalry between competing projects, and in November a group backed by Cobbs Bank proposed a 'Central Corn Exchange' on the west side of the Market Place, with a new street of shops behind it. The vicar, William Wilson tried to reconcile the two companies. The Liberal-controlled Board of Health demanded the removal of a tiny encroachment made by the Cornhill building. Both companies opened for business on Thursday 3 September 1857,

(1) Audrey Taylor, Gilletts: Bankers at Banbury and Oxford, 1964, pp.118-120.

(2) BG,6 Feb.1851;BG,7 April 1853;BG,21 April 1853;P.Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.xxv,56.

the Cornhill exchange without stands for merchants, and the Central with unplastered walls. The Cornhill company claimed in October to have let 30 stands, and declared the rival scheme was 'begotten in envy and maintained in jealousy and revenge'. The shops associated with the Central Exchange were never built and Liberals were mocked at elections for not finishing the scheme and making the town appear ridiculous. The Central was subsequently recognised as the official exchange but the essential business of trading remained in less formal settings, and in 1879 the mayor was still appealing to traders to use the exchange rather than the street. T. R. Cobb's obituarist in 1875 recalled 'the battle of the Corn Exchanges which brought victory to neither side'.(1)

The Corn Exchanges affair was an awful warning of the ridicule and waste which could occur when political and religious rivalries intruded into commercial affairs. In retailing there remained Whig, Tory and Radical shops, and Anglican and Dissenting craftsmen throughout the 1860s, but the professions became less involved in controversy. Cobbs Banks was amalgamated with an Aylesbury concern to form the Bucks. and Oxfordshire Union Bank in 1853. Gilletts, under the talented management of the four sons of Joseph Ashby Gillett who died in 1853, enlarged

(1) BG,9 Oct.1856;BG,23 Oct.1856; BG,30 Oct.1856; BG,6 Nov.1856; BG,29 Jan.1857; BG,29 Oct.1857; BG, 9 Dec.1858; BG,6 May 1875; BA,1 Jan.1857; BA,22 Jan.1857; BA,21 May 1857; BA,28 May 1857; BA,10 Sep.1857;BA,29 Oct.1857; BA,11 Aug.1859; BHL PC VIII, pp.22,28,193; William Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942,p.45; BPI RC, p.319.

their activities in Woodstock, opened a discount house in the City in 1867, and in the 70s moved with success into Witney and Oxford. Both the Cobbs and Gilletts withdrew from the textile trade and became more purely financial institutions than previously. Their horizons were lifted above the boundaries of the town and the limits of its factions.(1)

While the generation of solicitors which had experienced the reform agitation of the 1830s remained active, their successors showed less enthusiasm for public controversy. The death of Thomas Draper in 1869(2) brought an end to a period when leading solicitors had been openly involved in every aspect of public affairs. In the election of 1859 the writer of a squib asked if Banbury would submit to dictation by 'DRAPER, lawyer or banker',(3) but such language would have seemed inappropriate a decade later when bankers and lawyers had come to occupy narrower professional roles than had previously been customary.

The proportion of those employed in the professions rose only from 4.44 to 5.18 per cent of the labour force in the 1850s and 60s, due largely to an increase in the number of teachers from 67 to 114. The number of those involved with the legal profession rose from 26 to 40, and the total in banking actually fell by one.(4) The limited growth of the professions is probably explained by the narrower, more precise roles which professional men were coming to occupy. It is doubtful whether

(1) A. Taylor, op.cit., pp.128-162.

(2) BA,1 April 1869.

(3) BPL PC VIII, pp.122,219.

(4) Tables Three and Nine.

any bank clerk in 1871 had the same range of outside interests that William Barrett enjoyed 20 years earlier.(1)

The number of agricultural labourers in Banbury fell from 217 to 122 between 1851 and 1871, probably because high wages in the foundries drew men away from farming. The number of farmers increased slightly, due mostly to the settlement of retired agriculturalists in the suburbs. A slight decline in the number of horticulturalists masked the growth of Perry's nurseries into one of Banbury's most prosperous enterprises, with about 40 employees.(2)

It is not difficult to distinguish those features of economic life in Banbury in 1871 which would have appeared alien in 1850; the railway, the Britannia works, with its international connections, its paternalist management and its immigrant moulders and fitters, and the new 'warehouses' selling manufactured goods not made in the town. There were also changes in social attitudes. The class consciousness of skilled workers was expressed in trades unions and the co-operative movement, but it did not inhibit an acceptance of Samuelson's paternalist bounty. This attitude of deference did not extend to the rest of Banbury's ruling class. A proposal in 1863 to organise a gigantic dinner to celebrate the wedding of the Prince of Wales, modelled on that arranged for Queen Victoria's coronation, was dropped, because there had been 'a change in the habits and feelings of the

(1) See above p.69.

(2) BG,17 July 1857; BG, 17 Jan.1861; BG, 31 Dec.1863; BG, 18 Jan.1866.

English people', and men earning their livings were said to be loath to be the objects of 'eleemosynary hospitality'.(1) The hostility expressed towards shopkeepers by co-operators was never equalled by feelings against employers. It is possible that in the long term the growth of manufactures tended to create a fellow feeling between shopkeepers and the agricultural community, directed against both employers and workpeople in industry.

In some respects the likenesses between Banbury's economy in 1871 and that in 1850 are more striking than the differences. Domestic service occupied 17.87 per cent of the working population, almost exactly the same proportion as twenty years previously. The Michaelmas Fair still marked the peak of the year's trading. Banbury remained the 'metropolis of the carriers' carts'. It was still necessary for the bourgeoisie to organise soup kitchens for the poor in severe winters, and in a much publicised tragedy in 1857 the starved four year old daughter of a printer died after voraciously eating tripe broth on an empty stomach.(2) Least changed of all was the interdependence of town and countryside. The main reason for the flourishing state of Banbury's economy in 1871 was the relative prosperity of agriculture during the previous twenty years. When agriculture declined in the 1870s, Banbury declined with it.

(1) BG,10 Mar.1863; BA,10 Mar.1863.

(2) BA,5 Feb.1857; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892,p.76.

Chapter Eight.

Public Authority and Private Enterprise 1850-1880

'We have indeed encouragement to pursue in spite of interested clamour and ignorant prejudice, the path which science and law marks out for us; satisfied that the time will come when our labours, now but timidly recognised, will be honourably remembered by all who wish well to the town'. (1)

Historians have customarily written about mid-Victorian government in terms of tension between laissez-faire and interventionist ideologies, between Liberty and Authority. The development of Banbury between 1850 and 1880 suggests that at the local level this is a false antithesis, and that, as the late Professor W.L. Burn believed, the problems faced by those in authority were more important than the labels which people attached to themselves or which posterity has attached to them. (2) Banburians did not refrain from expressing ideologies. Some were impatient at delays in improving the town, and wished to use the authority of government to overcome the private interests which caused them. Others saw the encroaching powers of government as means of stifling enterprise, as arbitrary restrictions on freedom, and as devices by which the town's ruling élite could extend its influence. Most developments in mid-

(1) Report by Thomas Beesley on the first five years of the Banbury Board of Health, BG, 13 Aug. 1857.

(2) W.L. Burn, The Age of Equipoise, 1964, 132.

Victorian Banbury were shaped by a combination of private interests and public authority. The occasions on which men set aside their principles as a means of resolving problems were more significant than those when principles were put into practice. In Banbury, as in other towns, government authority was shared by a multiplicity of ad hoc bodies, vestries, the borough and county magistrates, the borough corporation, the local Board of Health and the Poor Law Guardians. Some developments were the responsibility of publicly accountable but non-governmental bodies, like the committees which managed the principal schools, or the boards of the water and gas companies. Others, like housing, were entirely private concerns.

After the effective abolition of Church Rates in 1853, (1) the vestries ceased to be political battlegrounds. The formation of the Banbury Poor Law Union made poor relief a regional rather than a town responsibility and the views of Liberal Banbury never prevailed on the local Board of Guardians. After the first few elections in the 1830s the town Guardians were mostly men without strong political attachments, and elections rarely aroused interest. The longest-serving Guardians were Francis Burgess, a retired Wesleyan minister, Henry Robert Brayne, a doctor, William Walford, a Neithrop landowner and the Revd. Henry Back, the vicar. In Grimsbury the office of Guardian rotated between the principal farmers until the 1860s when C.J. Brickwell, doctor and farmer, became chairman of the Board and was regularly returned. (2)

(1) See below p.285

(2) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories.

Between 1851 and 1881 the population of Banbury rose by 38 per cent from 8,793 to 12,126, (1) and about 800 new houses were built. The death rate fell steadily, and the town centre was almost entirely rebuilt. Drainage, water and gas supplies were introduced or reorganised,. Until 1870 the growth of population ran close to the national average, and the response of Banburians in the face of the sanitary problems which it brought, and the opportunities which it offered for development was typical of many towns.
In 1850 the General Board of Health issued the report on the sanitary condition of Banbury compiled by T.W. Rammell after his enquiry the previous year. A series of meetings led to the establishment of a local Board of Health, which as Rammell recommended, covered the whole parish. The Parliamentary order was made on 30 June 1852. The acceptance of Rammell's proposals was due largely to the advocacy of Edward Cobb, who envisaged the Board as a means towards the eventual unification of Banbury and Neithrop. He was opposed by farmers who objected to the rating of agriculture for town improvements, and by councillors who argued that the existing Paving and Lighting Commission was adequate for the needs of the borough. (2)

(1) For population figures see Table Two.
(2) T.W. Rammell, Report on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Banbury and Neithrop, 1850; William Potts, A History of Banbury, 1958, p.221; BG, 23 May 1850; BG, 1 Aug. 1850.

The Board of Health was composed of twelve members. Six, seconded by the corporation represented the borough, and were acknowledged to be the most important members of the council. (1) The other six were directly elected to represent the non-corporate parts of the parish. The Board assumed the functions of the corporation with respect to sanitary matters.

The powers of the Paving and Lighting Commission were transferred to the Board of Health on 5 August 1852, and the first election for the non-corporate areas took place the following day. Twelve candidates stood for the six seats, all but one of which were won by men of Liberal sympathies, who included the foundrymaster Bernhard Samuelson. The first meeting of the Board elected Edward Cobb as chairman. There was optimism about the Board's prospects. The Banbury Guardian commented:

> 'The costly squabbles, turmoils and party contests which have been heard of in too many places are not likely to occur in this district. There has been in this district since the passing of the Act an unanimity and cordiality of feeling which augurs most favourably for the working of the measure.' (2)

The Board did not fulfil such sanguine expectations. It suffered from a rapid turnover in membership. Of those elected or appointed in 1852, only three remained members in 1860. Only one member served without a break through the 1860s. Between 1852 and 1880 some 66 different individuals served on the Board. The political balance

(1) BG, 15 July 1852; BG, 26 Oct. 1865.

(2) BPL, PC VII, pp.54-55; NH, 7 Aug.1852; NH, 14 Aug.1852; NG, 12 Aug.1852.

on the Board varied with that on the Corporation. There was a Liberal majority throughout the 1850s. In the early 1860s there was a slight Conservative majority but in the late sixties and seventies the Liberals maintained control. In 1858 two Conservative farmers won a contested election, but in 1881 it was alleged that for 20 years there had been no election, and that the Board was self-nominated and irresponsible. (1) The quality of leadership declined after 1853 when Edward Cobb left the town, and Samuelson ceased to be a member. The next chairman was the Quaker miller Robert Field, whose reputation was tarnished by his role in the Cemetery affair. He was replaced in 1856 by the chemist Thomas Beesley, who regarded his duties in a serious and professional manner, and produced a perceptive report on the Board's first five years in 1857. He was forced to resign in 1858, probably because he wished to move the cattle market out of the streets. (2) In the early 1850s the Board was seen as a means of eliminating insanitary living conditions, of lowering rates, and of making Banbury into a beautiful as well as a healthy town. Richard Edmunds forecast that it would bring water to the areas which needed it, would eliminate bad accommodation which promoted immorality, and make Banbury a place of resort. (3)

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; BPL, PC VII, pp. 15-16; BPL, RC p.320; see below pp.267-68

(2) BG, 13 Aug. 1857; BG, 15 April 1858; BG, 22 April 1858; BG, 13 May 1858; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, pp.77-82.

(3) BG, 8 Aug. 1850.

The Board failed to fulfil such aspirations, because they were not accepted by the community at large, which saw many necessary measures as acts of petty tyrranny, inimical to the economic interests of the town. Interference with time-honoured practices like keeping pigs and slaughtering cattle in the centre of the town, building bow windows and ignoring building lines, was the most frequent cause of contention. The Board lacked the competence to cope with major matters like sewage disposal, because the appropriate technology was only in process of development. Confusion over the roles of public bodies and private companies in the provision of utilities reflected national uncertainty about the role of government. On minor issues the debate revealed basic differences of opinion about the sort of town Banbury should be. Typical of such disputes was a controversy which arose over an order made in September 1857 instructing butchers to remove hooks from outside their shops, thus preventing the obstruction of pavements by hanging carcasses. The clerk to the Board insisted that it was one of the first duties of the authority to keep the highway clear, but some members insisted that the public was against the Board on the matter and it would be better to drop it. One opponent said of the Board:

> 'instead of being a benefit and a blessing to the town, it is regarded not only as a nuisance, but as the greatest of all nuisances with which the town is cursed.'

Another argued:

> 'Banbury has risen to its present eminent business position from the uncontrolled energy and industry of its tradesmen and it especially behoves the Board to be careful of what it does inimical to the trading interests of the town, always bearing in mind that Banbury is a business town, and that the legislation suitable for a Leamington or a Cheltenham is quite out of place here.' (1)

In 1854 the houses were numbered, but the painter encountered so much opposition that the work was seriously delayed. In 1858 the Board found that a nameplate inscribed 'Queen Street' had been erected without authorisation at the end of Crouch Street and ordered it to be removed, but it was still in place four years later. In 1861 an extensive renaming of streets aroused some opposition. (2)

The Board came into conflict with many established market town practices. In 1871 it prosecuted two carriers for obstructing the highway, but the magistrates ruled in favour of the defendants who remained in 'the standings they had so long occupied.' In 1873 the Board's inspector found that many of the vans at the Michaelmas Fair were filthy, but nothing could be done about it. In the same year George Cave was ordered to stop burning lime in his kilns

(1) BG, 11 Feb. 1858; BPL, PC IX, p.12; ORO, B of H Mins. BB/X/i/1, passim.

(2) ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/1-2, 13 Dec. 1858, 3 Sep. 1861, 9 Feb. 1863; BG, 16 Nov. 1854; BG, 27 Feb. 1862.

near the canal, which produced an acrid fog which had been the subject of complaints since 1862. (1) During 1863 there was a dispute about slaughterhouses in Church Lane which the Board tried to close, thus, it was alleged, depriving butchers of their livings. In 1865 there was controversy over slaughter houses in High Street and Parsons Street, and pig sties in Fish Street. (2) In 1881 much ridicule was attracted by the 'White Lion Pig Case' when the Board tried to eradicate pig keeping in the very heart of Banbury. (3)

The Board's achievements in other spheres won respect. Plans for new sewers were completed by May 1854 when contractors were sought, and the clerk of works was appointed in July. As the sewers came into operation, huge dung heaps were removed from the Leys and the Shades. By 1857 three main sewers had been completed, with a loan of £4,300 from the General Board of Health. (4)

(1) ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/2, 22 Sep. 1862 ibid BB/X/iii/1, 28 July 1871; 27 Oct. 1873; 17 Nov. 1873; ibid, BB/X/i/3, 1 July 1878.

(2) ORO, B. of H. Mins. BB/X/i/2, 7 Aug. 1865, 25 Sep. 1865.

(3) ORO, B. of H. Mins. BB/X/iii/1, 17 Nov. 1873; ibid, BB/X/i/3, 14 Aug. 1876; BA, 22 Dec. 1881 and passim; BG, 22 Dec. 1881 and passim; BPL, RC p.320.

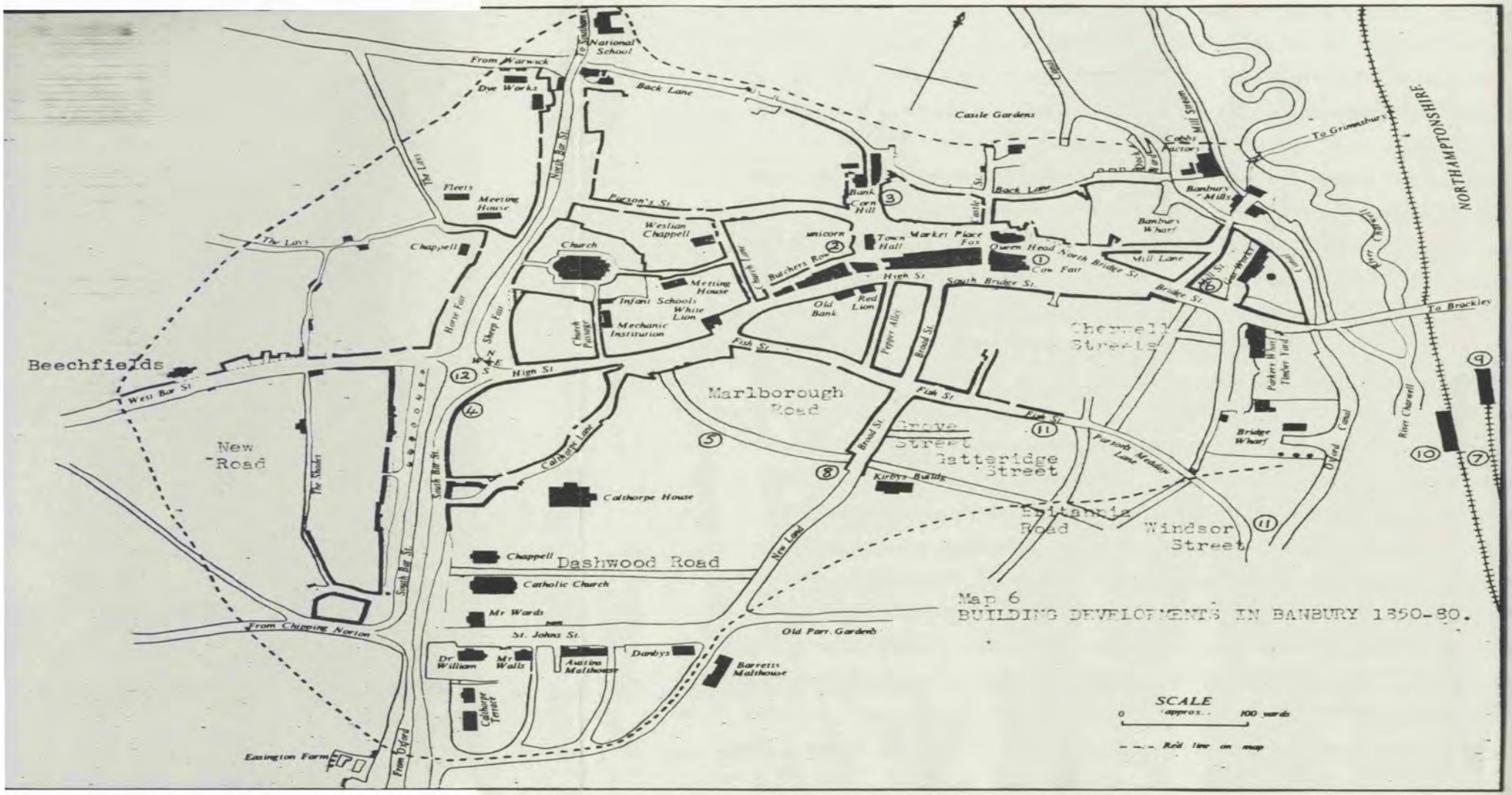
(4) BG, 18 May 1854; BG, 13 July 1854; BG, 24 Aug. 1854; BG, 13 Aug. 1857.

The effluent from the new sewers went into the Cherwell untreated, and Banbury gained a reputation for its foul smell, said to have been noticeable from passing non-stop trains. Plans for a filtration works were made by the Board's surveyor, Thomas Garrett, in 1858, but were not implemented. In his guide book written in 1859 W.P. Johnson quoted Shenstone's poem 'Cherwell's verdant side' and commented that the poet wrote before the establishment of Boards of Health and the concomitant nuisance of common sewers. (1) In 1861 Stephen Spokes of Twyford Mill complained that sewage was contaminating his stretch of the river, and in November 1865 he began legal action. The following year the Board leased 137 acres of Spital Farm to the east of the town for a sewage irrigation scheme. A pumping engine was built, and the system came into operation in December 1867. The following season's meadow and rye grass realised over £200, and for a time the scheme came close to realising the aspirations of many Victorian sanitary reformers by making a profit. In 1871 Spital Farm was purchased by a consortium of citizens for £23,000 and sold to the Board at the same cost. (2) The irrigation scheme gained national repute.

(1) ORO, B. of Mins., BB/X/i/1, 9 May 1858, 5 Sep. 1858; BG, 21 Sep. 1865; W.P. Johnson, The Stranger's Guide through Banbury, 1859, p.4.

(2) ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/1, 3 Sep. 1861; ibid, BB/X/i/2 27 Nov. 1865, 23 Mar. 1866, 9 Oct. 1866; ibid, BB/X/iii/1, 17 April 1871, 27 Oct. 1871, 20 Nov. 1871; BG, 19 July 1866; BG, 25 June 1868; BG, 13 April 1871; BG, 16 Nov. 1871; BA, 19 Dec. 1867.

To face p.228.



Map 6
BUILDING DEVELOPMENTS IN BANBURY 1850-80.

Map Six. KEY.

1. Town Hall.
2. Central Corn Exchange.
3. Cornhill Corn Exchange.
4. Congregationalist Chapel.
5. Wesleyan Chapel.
6. Temperance Hall.
7. Gasworks.
8. County Police Station.
9. LNWR Station.
10. GWR Station.
11. Britannia Works (2 sections).
12. Banbury Cross.

Accounts of it were published in the Gardeners' Chronicle, Land and Water, The Field, the Salopian Journal and the Bedfordshire Mercury. It was commended in a report on the sanitary condition of the town in 1870, in which year Spokes began to raise trout in the Cherwell at Twyford. (1)
The Board of Health quickly concluded that it could not raise the capital to provide the town with water. The formation of a water company was announced in August 1854, and a prospectus issued early in 1855, but it was not until the summer of 1857 that the water company took shape. A meeting was held in June at which a scheme to take water from the Cherwell near Grimsbury Mill was announced, and by the time of the first annual meeting in August, £7,000 had been subscribed. By March 1858 pipes had been laid, and water was being supplied, although consumers were warned that it would be of poor quality until the pipes were cleaned out. (2) In 1864 the Board contemplated borrowing £17,200 to purchase the Water Company, but there were allegations that some individuals were involved on both sides of the transaction and the proposal was dropped. (3)
The canal-side gasworks in Bridge Street established in the 1830s was enlarged in 1850 and 1852 in anticipation of increased demand from the railway stations. In 1854 there was a prospect

(1) BG, 17 Mar. 1870; BG, 12 May 1870; BG, 8 Sep. 1870; BG, 13 Jan. 1875; Salopian Journal, 11 Oct. 1871.
(2) BPL, PC VII, p.94; BG, 28 Sep. 1854; BG, 2 July 1857; BG, 6 Aug. 1857; BG, 25 Mar. 1858.
(3) BPL, PC IX, pp.126-29, 145, 152-53; BA, 21 Jan. 1864; ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/2, passim.

that a rival gas company would be formed, but Bernhard Samuelson intervened to prevent wasteful competition. A new works was built by the existing company between the two railways. The old site was offered for sale in August and the first gas from the new works flowed into the mains in November 1854. (1)

In 1852 when the Board of Health was constituted there were 50 street lamps in the borough, but only ten, all privately financed, in Neithrop. By December 1852 sites for 42 lamps in Neithrop had been recommended. By 1865 there were 96 lamps in Banbury, 54 in Neithrop and nine in Grimsbury. (2)

The Board contracted out of the scavenging of the streets, and from 1867 each house was provided with a receptable for rubbish. (3)

Housing was entirely the concern of the private sector, the role of the Board of Health being only to approve the laying out of new streets, to inspect the building lines and drainage facilities of new developments, and, when appropriate, to take new roads into public control.

The development which most epitomised the ethos of Liberal Banbury was New Grimsbury, originally called Freetown. Early in 1851 an audience of 300 heard James Taylor of Birmingham

(1) G.C.J. Hartland, 'Gasmaking in Banbury' C & CH IV.4, 1969, pp.47-49; BPL, PC VII, p.85.

(2) BG, 30 Sep. 1852; BG, 14 Oct. 1852; BG, 28 Oct. 1852; BG, 2 Dec. 1852; BG, 13 Aug. 1857; ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/2, 17 April 1865.

(3) ORO, B. of H. Mins. BB/X/i/2, 28 Jan. 1867; BG, 13 Aug. 1857.

lecture in Banbury on Freehold Land Societies. Taylor was a disciple of the Unitarian minister George Dawson, and a zealous crusader for working-class self-help. The principle of a freehold land society was that members should subscribe to buy land at wholesale prices, and distribute building plots among themselves at the same price. By creating freeholds, such societies extended the franchise in county constituencies, but Taylor denied that such consequences had a party object. (1)
The formation of a Banbury Freehold Land Society was proposed by Francis Francillon. Henry Tancred became president, and headquarters were established at the Mechanics' Institute. Cobbs became the society's bankers, and Bernhard Samuelson joined its committee. A plot of 13 acres to the north of the turnpike road to Middleton Cheney, 300 yards east of Banbury Bridge, was purchased from Sloan Stanley by T.R. Cobb, and sold to the Society for the same price. (2)
Three of the 13 acres were used for roads, and the remaining ten divided into 151 plots. By April 1853 the roads and drains were under construction and the plots were allocated by ballot. The name of each shareholder was written on a piece of paper, together with an indication of how many lots he was entitled to.

(1) BG, 6 Feb. 1851; for freehold land societies see S.D. Chapman and J.N. Bartlett, 'The Contribution of Buildings Clubs and Freehold Land Societies to Working Class Housing in Birmingham', S.D. Chapman, ed., The History of Working Class Housing, 1971, pp.223-246.
(2) BG 6 Feb. 1851; 10 April 1851; BG, 7 April, 1853; BG, 21 April 1853; BG, 22 Feb. 1855; Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents, 1969 p.74.

The member whose name was drawn first took plot no. 1, and so on, with plural shareholders taking as many consecutive lots as they held shares. The plots were divided between 101 shareholders, who were bound to observe covenants about building lines and the value of houses to be built. (1) The subscribers included most of Banbury's Liberal élite, but few working men, and the estate became an area for small scale speculative building rather than owner occupation. Bernhard Samuelson subscribed for six shares and drew Nos. 41-46, the first two of which became the site of the Prince of Wales public house. In Centre Street, plot 37 allocated to William Cubitt was developed by the builder William Wilkins who erected two houses there in 1861. Plots 66 and 67 won in the ballot by T.H. Wyatt, the brewer, and Thomas Dumbleton, a saddler, were the site of three dwellings constructed by the builders Thomas and Stephen Orchard in 1858. (2) While the quality of building on the estate was higher than elsewhere in the town, there were few owner occupiers and the pattern of ownership was not very different from purely private developments. The houses along the turnpike road formed the 'front row' of the estate and became a middle class suburb. Many of the owners purchased the equivalent plots in South Street and thus obtained long gardens giving rear access to their premises.

(1) BG, 7 April 1853; ORO 315/M/3/24, Plan of the Property of the Banbury Freehold Land Society situate at Grimsbury, Northamptonshire 1853.

(2) Ibid; ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/1, passim.

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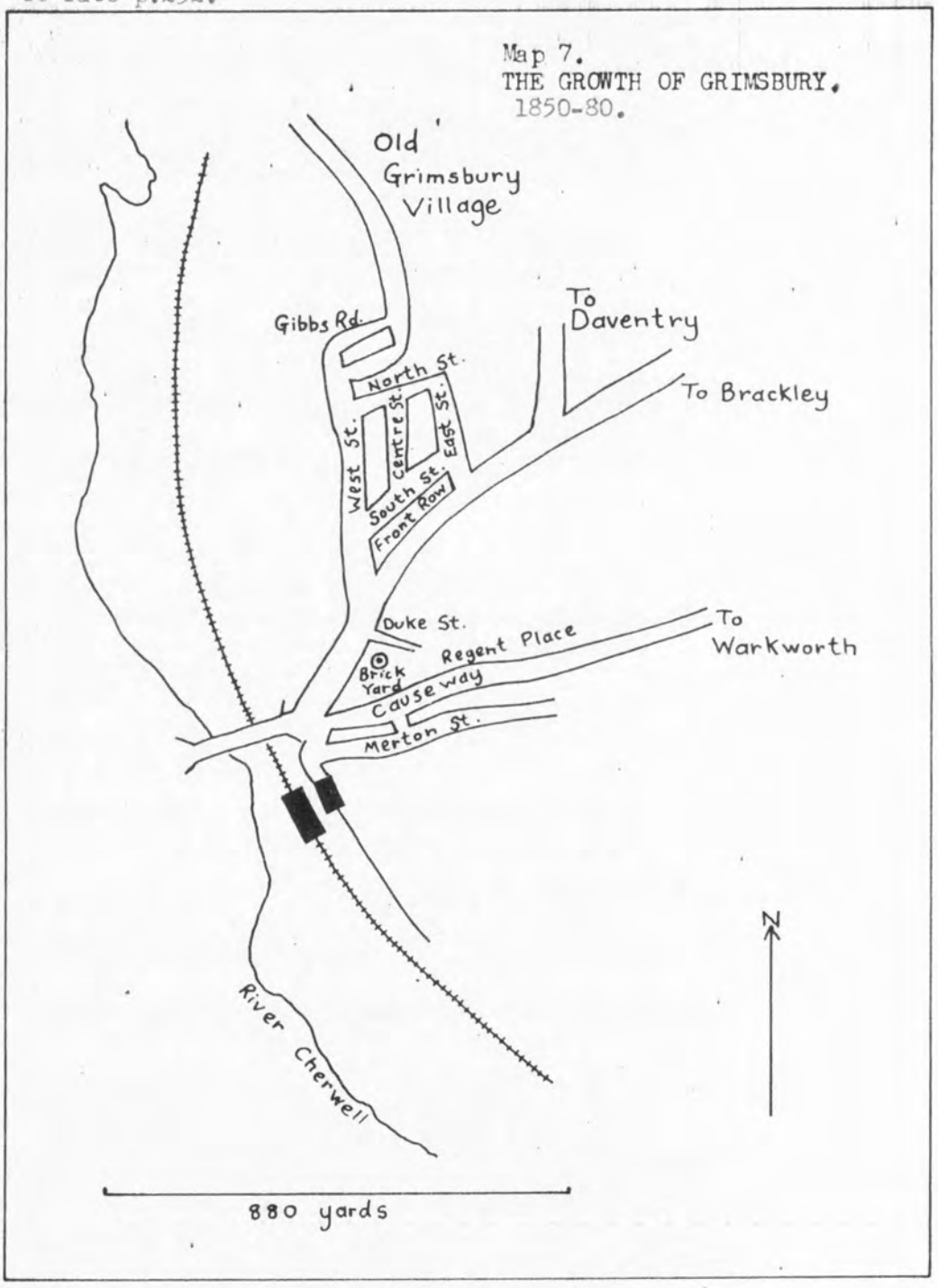
Map 7.
THE GROWTH OF GRIMSBURY.
1850-80.
Old Grimsbury Village
Gibbs Rd.
To Daventry
To Brackley
North St.
West St.
Centre St.
East St.
South St.
Front Row
Duke St.
To Warkworth
Regent Place
Brick Yard
Causeway
Merton St.
River Cherwell
N
880 yards

By 1861 there were 22 houses in the row, the inhabitants including clerks from the foundries, banks and breweries, commercial travellers, a Baptist minister, the canal company surveyor, the master of the British School and an excise officer. Only one occupant, William Baker, a draper, was an active shopkeeper. Ten years later when there were 25 houses in the row, there was still only one active trader. (1) The estate grew slowly. Some plots were used as gardens and the area gained the name of 'The Diggings'. The inhabitants outside 'Front Row' were mostly artisans. The occupants of the 25 houses in Centre Street in 1861 included a postman, a millwright, a railway porter, a bricklayer, a boat builder and a labourer at a coal wharf. In the early 1870s the east side of East Street and the west side of West Street which were not part of the Freehold Land Society property became available for development. They were filled in with terraces of up to twelve houses, whereas those on the estate were grouped in twos, threes and fours. (2)

The Freehold Land Society stimulated other building in Grimsbury. Plots on the turnpike road to the east of East Street were sold for building in the early 1870s, and by 1871 most of the 300 yard gap between the bridge and the estate had been filled with houses. To the north of the estate Robert Gibbs was authorised to lay out the road which later bore his name in 1873. (3)

(1) PRO, RG 9,1861 Census; PRO, RG, 10, 1871 Census; William Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942, pp.98-99.

(2) PRO, RG 9,1861 Census; BG, 28 Mar. 1872; T.W. Ross, Reminiscences of Old Banbury, 1903, pp.18-19.

(3) PRO, RG 9, 1861 Census; PRO, RG10, 1871 Census; Ordnance Survey first edition 25 in. map; BG, 28 Mar. 1872; ORO B. of H. Mins., BB/X/iii/1, 15 Dec, 1873; ibid , BB/X/i/1, 28 Dec. 1863.

To the south west the ancient causeway to Warkworth was lined with working-class dwellings in the 1850s and 60s. On the north side, several terraces of four room cottages called Regent Place were built by William Wilkins, who purchased the site in 1852, and financed the construction of the houses by a series of 5 per cent mortgages, one of them from an illiterate shoemaker from Camberwell. Ten were constructed in 1856, 14 in the following year, eight more by 1860, and a further six between 1869 and 1871. Between the Causeway and Middleton Road, at the edge of Wilkins's brick pit, was Duke Street, a terrace of 30 houses built about 1870. Other cottages were built on the south side of Causeway. Ebenezer Wall received sanction to construct eight in 1871, and one George Cary gained authorisation for four the following year. (1) South of the Causeway the first houses on a new road, later called Merton Street, were authorised in 1873 and various speculators had built 57 by 1882. (2)

The construction of houses on the Cherwell meadows continued after 1850, and by 1871 there were about 350 dwellings in the area. One of the first tasks of the Board of Health was to move the piles of filth which had accumulated in the ill-drained Cherwell Streets in the 1840s. (3)

(1) Sarah Gosling, '57-129 Causeway, Banbury' in Crispin Paine et al, 'Working Class Housing in Oxfordshire,' Oxoniensia, XLIII, 1978, pp.201-04.

(2) ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/iii/1, 28 April 1873; Ordnance Survey first edition 25 in. map.

(3) BG, 23 Dec. 1852.

Most of the development after 1850 was on The Gatteridges, an estate purchased from the Spurrett family by Thomas Draper, who laid out streets and sold plots to developers. When the Board of Health considered the condition of Upper Windsor Street in 1864, it was noted that the road was built and drained by Mr Draper, and that terraces had been constructed by three speculators. Gatteridge Street running eastwards from Newland was sufficiently developed in 1853 for an application to be made for street lamps. Plans for Britannia Road were drawn up in 1853, and houses were being built there in 1858. (1) Most of the streets in the Cherwell area were occupied by the working class. In 1871 the occupants of the 33 houses in Windsor Terrace included 17 skilled and six unskilled foundry workers, 13 builders, a shoemaker, a Post Office telegraph linesman, a railway porter, a canal boatman, a porter at an ironmonger's, a laundress and six women who made their livings by needlecraft. Gatteridge Street had more middle class residents, including an excise officer, a coach builder employing 11 men, a decorator also employing 11, and several clerks. (2)

There was much building in Broad Street where the Board of Health complained in 1854 of obstruction by materials for new houses. In 1861 a cul-de-sac on the east side, later called Grove Street was sanctioned. Ten of the houses were offered

(1) ORO 315/M/13, Plan of the Property of the Banbury Freehold Land Society; ORO, B. of H. Mins ., BB/X/i/1, 7 May 1858; BA, 1 April 1869; BG, 25 Aug, 1853; BG, 24 Mar. 1864

(2) PRO, RG, 10, 1871 Census.

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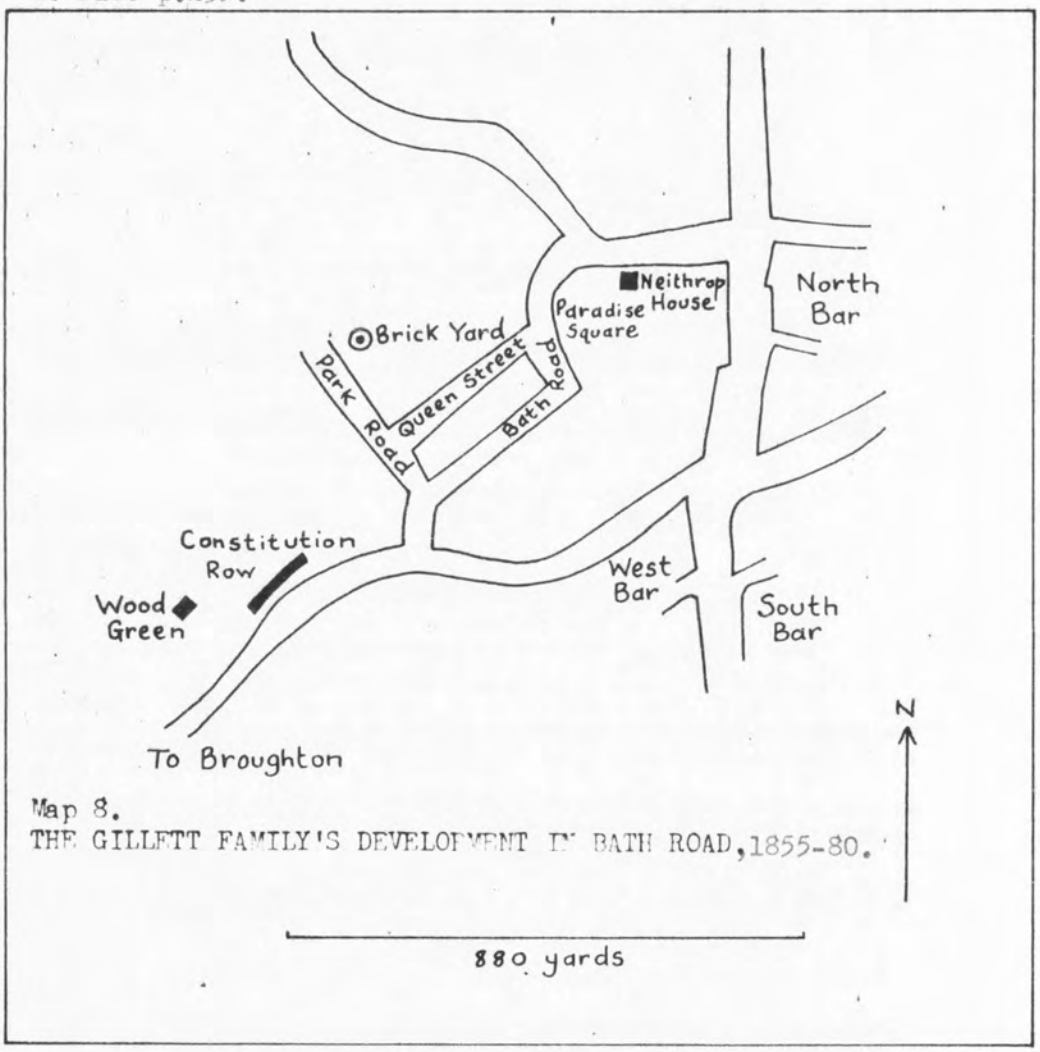

Map 8.
THE GILLETT FAMILY'S DEVELOPMENT IN BATH ROAD, 1855-80.

for sale as an investment in 1862, when attention was drawn to their 'quiet and cheerful situation' and their proximity to the principal foundries. They were let to 'respectable tenants' at 3s6d. a week. In 1870 the construction of Grove Place (later Newland Place) on the western side of Broad Street was sanctioned. Census returns show that the area was, as W.P. Johnson observed in 1859, made up 'chiefly of the dwellings of the working class'. (1) To the west of the town the Gillett family extended Paradise Lane, previously a cul-de-sac off the Warwick Road, across the gardens called the Vineyards, to the Broughton Road. Notice of intent to build the road was given in September 1855 and the contract for constructing it was let the following month. Plots were let to speculators but the area developed slowly. By 1862 the new road was called Bath Road, and the following year another road joining it was named Queen Street. Park Road was constructed during the 1870s. Some of the houses were meanly dimensioned two storey brick cottages. Others were elegant Gothic villas. By 1871 only about 17 houses had been built in Bath Road, and seven in Queen Street. By 1882 there were 27 in Bath Road, 48 in Queen Street and 24 in Park Road. (2)

(1) W.P. Johnson, Stranger's Guide, p.21 ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/1, 1 July 1861; ibid, BB/X/iii/1, 7 Mar. 1870; BG, 25 Sep. 1862; BA, 23 July 1868.

(2) George Herbert, Shoemaker's Window, 1949, p.45 BG, 6 Sep. 1855; BG, 27 Feb. 1862; BA, 19 Oct. 1855, ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/2, 21 April 1863; ibid., BB/X/i/3, passim; PRO, RG, 10 1871 Census; Ordnance Survey first edition 25 in. map.

The Calthorpe Estate, the property of Edward Cobb, to the south of the town centre, was gradually developed during the 1860s. In 1857 and 1858 Cobb sold two portions of the pleasure grounds of Calthorpe House to Dr. R. Stanton Wise, who, by 1863, had laid out a new street linking Newland with High Street, which he called Marlborough Road. It was taken over by the Board of Health in 1870, and in 1872-73 the Board granted applications for houses in Marlborough Place, a cul-de-sac, for which Wise had received sanction in 1866. (1) In 1861 Edward Cobb laid out Dashwood Road linking Newland and South Bar, and by 1862 eleven building plots had been marked out between it and St. John's Road. They were gradually filled with the residences of such wealthy citizens as William Edmunds the brewer. (2) The southern edge of the town was already by 1860 the principal resort of the wealthiest of Banbury's middle class. The mainspring of development was an attempt in 1852 to provide houses for 'respectable families not engaged in business'. Such families, argued the Banbury Guardian, would be of benefit to the town:

(1) BA, 5 Feb. 1865; ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/2, 26 Mar. 1866; ibid, BB/X/iii/1, 7 Mar. 1870.
(2) ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/1, 8 April 1861, 10 Sep. 1866; ORO, 315/71, Bundle B, Cobb papers.

> 'we have workers and those who are seeking to get money in abundance; and it must be a wise step to encourage the residence amongst us of those who come to spend and not to get money.'

Fourteen plots were laid out on the Oxford Road and in St. John's Road, and sold with designs for villas prepared by Edward Bruton, architect of the town hall. The 1871 census shows that several actually were occupied by people living on income from investments. Others were the homes of solicitors and senior clerks, and one was a boarding school. (1) Further south Thomas Draper purchased the Hightown estate in 1861, with the intention of 'giving the inhabitants of Banbury an opportunity to buy three, two, one or half acre sites at £300-£500 an acre for suburban or villa residences.' He laid out a new road, although most of the houses along it were not built until the 1880s and 90s. More attractive to the wealthy in the 1860s and 70s, because nearer to the town centre, were the Gothic terraces and villas of West Bar. (2)

(1) BG, 28 April 1853; BG, 13 May 1852; 1871 Census, PRO, RG 10.

(2) BH, 3 Jan. 1861; BH, 4 April 1861; ORO 315/M/1/6, Plan of a 'New Road' from Oxford Road to the GWR station, 1860, VCH Oxon X, p.37.

To the north and west of the town centre terraces of working-class cottages were built off the New Road, following the clearance of dung heaps in the 1850s, and on the Castle Gardens where the Board of Health sanctioned a road linking North Bar and the Market Place in 1854. (1)

Most housing in Banbury was provided by small scale speculators. Some were builders, among them William Wilkins, bricklayer and brickmaker, who constructed most of the north side of the Causeway, the whole of Duke Street, several terraces on the Freehold Land Society estate, at least 19 houses in Castle Street, and others in Marlborough Road, Gatteridge Street and Dashwood Road. His houses were,for the most part, small and ill-constructed, and the despair of the medical profession. He was described by a doctor in 1870 as one who 'would lay down some bricks at night to find them houses in the morning.... who made fortunes out of poor people while denying them pure water.' (2) William Aris, another builder and brickmaker, built numerous houses on the Gillett family's development in Bath Road, several terraces in Windsor Street, 18 houses in Broad Street and the whole of Grove Street. While Wilkins retained the

(1) BG, 12 Jan. 1854; BG, 26 Aug. 1861; NH, 11 Feb. 1854; ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i-ii, passim.

(2) BG, 17 Nov. 1870.

ownership of the houses he built, Aris sold many of his to fellow speculators. Albert Kimberley, another builder, constructed houses in Windsor Street, Britannia Road, Bath Road, Middleton Road and West Street. Other developers had no apparent connections with the building trade. Joseph Mascord, an ironmonger who went bankrupt in 1870 owned various properties in the town centre, a terrace of 12 cottages in Windsor Street and five plots on the Freehold Land society estate. Ebenezer Wall, Liberal,Disciple of Christ and ropemaker, was building throughout the 1850s, 60s and 70s, among his properties being a terrace in the Causeway, cottages on the Freehold Land Society estate, and Britannia Terrace. Proprietors like the Gilletts, the Cobbs, Thomas Draper and R.S. Wise brought land onto the market in quantities which made development possible, but the actual building was mostly undertaken by people of less standing and resources. (1)

The rate of house-building was uneven, although gaps in the records of the Board of Health prevent the formulation of complete series of statistics. In the nine years from 1857 to 1866, 289 houses were authorised, a mean of 28.9 per year, but half were

(1) BG, 14 April 1870; ORO/BB/i, ii B. of H. Mins., passim.

sanctioned in the two years 1860 and 1861. In the nine years from 1870 to 1878, 353 houses were authorised, an average of 39.2 per year, but 62 were authorised both in 1873 and 1878. (1)

Much of the centre of Banbury was rebuilt between 1850 and 1880. The new town hall in Bridge Street, designed by Edward Bruton and completed in 1854, was seen as an ornament to the approach to the town from the new railway stations. It was a building indelibly associated with the Liberal Party, which was often blamed for its appearance. The clock was not added until 1860, the year when the old town hall was removed from the Market Place, and re-erected on a canal-side wharf owned by Thomas Draper, and used for the storage of artificial manure. (2) The Board of Health records show a continual process of alteration and rebuilding in Parsons Street, High Street, the Market Place and Bridge Street, the principal shopping areas. Few market towns are so dominated by Victorian frontages as Banbury. Most shop buildings of the mid-nineteenth century had classical proportions, were of three or four storeys, and were constructed of local brick, with Bath stone quoins, sills and lintels, and sometimes with complete window surrounds in stone, with scrolls

(1) ORO B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i-ii, passim.,

(2) B. Trinder, Victorian MP, p.xxvi, BG, 25 April 1860; BG, 17 May 1860; BA; 17 May 1860.

on the supporting sills. High ceilinged rooms on the first floors show that most were intended for accommodation as well as trade. Bath stone for coping was delivered to Banbury by rail and by 1853 was being sold below the price of the local Hornton stone. (1)

The establishment of the Board of Health removed some of the urgency for uniting Banbury and Neithrop but it did nothing to improve public order. Thomas Draper, who lived at Calthorpe House, told the magistrates in 1850 that following the murder of a prostitute in Calthorpe Street in October 1858, 'disgraceful scenes of drunkeness, cursing, swearing, obscene and beastly language' had increased, and that the borough police would not venture beyond the 'white mark on the wall', which indicated the Neithrop boundary. (2) Several attempts were made to unify the borough and Neithrop but they came to nothing. (3)

Banbury retained its independent police force until 1925, although there were several attempts to merge it with neighbouring forces. In 1860 an inspector

(1) NH, 30 April 1853; BG, 14 July 1859.

(2) BG, 4 April 1878; BG, 13 June 1878; BG, 28 Nov. 1878; BG, 17 July 1879; BPL RC, p.314.

(3) BG, 18 Nov. 1858; BG, 22 Sep. 1859; BG, 23 Nov. 1866.

pointed out that Banbury was one of only two towns with populations below 5,000 to have its own force. Local councillors were proud of the town's relative freedom from crime - it was claimed that there had been only two burglaries in 25 years. Others complained that Banbury's criminals operated outside the borough, and deplored the lack of watch between 5.am and 7am. the time when depredators returned from the countryside with their loot. A reorganisation took place in 1860, when William Thompson became a full-time superintendent, with a brass plate on his door. He retired at the age of 79 in 1875, and one of the first tasks of his successor was to replace the constables' tall hats with helmets. (1) The non-corporate parts of the parish were policed from June 1857 when an inspector and two constables of the newly formed Oxfordshire force took up their duties in Neithrop. A police station was built in Newland in 1861-62. (2)
An inspector of prisons remarked in 1851 that he had never seen such a bad goal as that maintained by the borough corporation in the Market Place. It was closed in 1852, when prisoners were removed to Oxford, and from 1854 its function as an overnight lock-up was taken over by the cells in the new town hall. (3)

(1) BG, 5 Jan. 1860; BA, 5 Jan. 1860; BA, 4 Nov. 1875; BA, 16 Dec. 1875; ORO/BB/V/ii/1, Minutes of Banbury Watch Committee 1836-66; BB/V/ii/Z ibid., 1866-89.
(2) BG, 23 May 1861; BG, 15 May 1862.
(3) BG, 17 April 1851; BG, 13 July 1854.

Public authority and private enterprise were both involved in the provision of education in Banbury. The population of young persons between 2 and 18 in the town rose from 3,259 in 1851 to 4,544 in 1871, an increase of 39.43 per cent. Comparison of the two censuses suggests that the expansion of school places failed by a small margin to keep pace with this increase. In 1871 there were 2,199 young people recorded as scholars on the census, 48.39 per cent of the age group, compared with 51.18 per cent in 1851. It seems likely that at least one enumerator in 1871 was inconsistent in recording whether children were attending school or not, but even allowing for some under-recording in 1871, it is clear that at best the provision of new school places can only just have matched the population increase, and that the proportion of children at school did not grow in the 1850s and 60s. In 1870 it was estimated there were 1,894 children attending school in Banbury, 1,484 at public and 410 at private establishments. By 1877, 1999 children attended the six public (ly supported) schools. The 1871 census suggests a marked decline in the practice of sending very young children to dame schools. In 1851 26.79 per cent of two year olds were recorded as scholars, but the figure fell to 2.90 per cent 20 years later. The proportion of three year olds in school fell from 45.69 to 35.71 per cent, but the proportion of five year olds was almost the same. The proportion of children of 14 and over attending school was slightly higher in 1871 than in 1851. (1)

(1) Table Eight; Memo to accompany the General Return on the 1870 Education Act, BPL/BVF/Ed.

Several new schools were provided. An Infant School, opened in Windsor Terrace in 1851, was absorbed ten years later in the Cherwell British Schools, which were built by Bernhard Samuelson. Christ Church National Schools were opened in Grimsbury in 1862. (1)

Although Samuelson advocated a School Board in Banbury after the passing of the 1870 Education Act, there was opposition to such a board on the grounds of increased costs, and in the 1870s, increased capacity had to be provided in the existing schools. (2)

The British School provided rather more than the basics of education. J.H. Beale, its Canadian-born head master, who was appointed in 1854, was a school master of exceptional talents. Matthew Arnold HMI reported in 1858 that 'Mr Beale's great exertions and remarkable personal influence continue to produce more and more complete results in the school'. Another inspector commented on the eve of the introduction of the Revised Code in 1863, 'This is a most excellent school, and I should say there are few which are likely

(1) William Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942, pp.80-82.

(2) BA, 22 Dec. 1870; BPL, RC, p.381.

to pass so creditably under the new ordeal.'

The school committee responded to the Revised Code by insisting that they considered reading, writing and arithmetic to be no more than means to Education and not Education itself, and expressed themselves satisfied that the teachers should persevere with a more liberal syllabus. Beale was constantly responsive to the quality of homework, frequently re-arranged the details of the syllabus, and was keenly interested in the progress of individual boys. His delight shines through the pages of his log book on such occasions as when, in 1866, Richard Wright, having completed his pupil teachership, gained a first class Queen's Scholarship, and went to study at Borough Road College. Beale responded to every kind of educational opportunity. In 1863 he took a party to the Crystal Palace, and in 1864 arranged for a Coventry weaver to demonstrate the manufacture of silk ribbons. His birthday on 13 May was always celebrated, and in 1865 when it fell on a Saturday, he was greeted outside the school by 60 boys and pupil teachers. He also organised the Science and Art classes, and used them to do advanced work with his school pupils. In 1862 Matthew Arnold commended his success:

> '...in the First Class of this British School, I found a boy, not 12 years old, who has carried off the Gold Medal for Physiology against several hundred competitors, many of them men of 30 and 40'.

Pupils won numerous prizes in such national competitions. The liberal, science-based education which Beale strove to

provide was exactly that recommended by Bernhard Samuelson, one of the chief advocates in the House of Commons of scientific and technical education. Yet even in Samuelson's constituency, the educational constraints of the Revised Code, and the administrative limitations of the 1870 Education Act, prevented those with imagination from bringing into being that kind of schooling which they knew to be necessary. Attempts in 1868 to establish a grammar school ~~in 1868~~, funded by the town's educational charities, came to nothing, but the British School demonstrated that a high level of education could be achieved with limited resources in a provincial town. In 1878 Beale retired to concentrate on a private school which he had established some years previously at the Ark House, Some boys went with him, and many more were withdrawn from the British School on his departure. (1)

Banbury, like most English towns, was in many respects transformed between 1850 and 1880. Substantial changes were made in public health, public order and education, which marked decisive breaks with age-old practices. The improvement in public health was dramatic. The death rate fell from 23.0 per 1,000 in 1850 to 13.5 in 1895. The town was drained and supplied with water, and its gas supply was extended, all in the face of a rapidly growing population. Some areas remained squalid. In 1870 Globe Court and Calthorpe Court off Calthorpe Street were reported to be ill-paved and full of offensive

(1) ORO, BB/XI/vii/Z, Log Book of Banbury British School Boys, 1862-89; BPL, PC IX pp.56, 121; BA; 3 Oct. 1878; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.118. M. Argyles From South Kensington to Robbins: An Account of English Technical and Scientific Education since 1851; 1964, p.26, 31-33, 136.

matter. In 1871 26 people were crowded into the Rag Row lodging house, presided over by Bridget Ward, then aged 78, who had once owned the notorious lodging house in Waterloo. (1) Yet few really bad houses were built after 1850. Whatever the deficiencies of William Wilkins's cottages, the Causeway never became as squalid as the Cherwell Streets had been in the 1840s, almost as soon as they were built. The worst housing remained that in the town centre, where, by the 1870s the Board of Health was beginning to use its powers to declare accommodation unfit for habitation. (2) The changes in the town are better interpreted as the achievements of a community, the results of tensions between principles, individuals and groups, than as an advertisement for either interventionism or laissez faire. Many of these who were most active as private individuals in the development of Banbury were also holders of public office. James Cadbury lived on his investments in property, and was a member of the Board of Health, the British School Committee, and many other causes. Thomas Draper, was a member of the corporation and the Board of Health, as well as the developer of the southern part of the Cherwell area and Hightown Road. The considerable degree of common membership between the Board of Health and the Water Company in the 1860s aroused suspicions of corruption

(1) VCH Oxon X., p.85; BG, 8 Sep. 1870; 1871 Census; PRO, RG, 10.

(2) ORO,B. of H. Mins., ORO BB/X/iii/1, 9 June 1873.

but such situations were almost inevitable, given the intimacy of society in Banbury. Almost all authority was exercised from within the town, and those who held power could see its effects immediately and make their judgments on their own experiences. In 1873 the magistrates ordered the police to stop open air meetings, after one justice complained about the violent language used by teetotallers. In 1866 the Board of Health heard a member complain that on the previous day Mr Norton's son caused a nuisance by riding a velocipede, and he was warned about his future conduct. (1) The magistrates were over-ruled, and whether the Board had power over velocipedes is questionable, but such trivial incidents show how close were the decision makers to those affected by their decisions, and how relatively unimportant was the precise status of a particular authority. Banbury was ruled by an élite, and authority came as much from membership of that élite as from powers devolved by central government or conferred by democratic election. When William Wilkins was denounced in 1870 for the polluted water supplies of his cottages, the rebuke came not from a bureaucrat but from one of the town's doctors who was also a member of the borough council. (2)

(1) BA, 26 June 1873; ORO, B. of H. Mins., BB/X/i/2, 21 May 1866.

(2) BG, 17 Nov. 1870.

It is likely that the weight of the rebuke was derived rather from the regard in which the doctor was held than from his official position.

Private enterprise and public authority were inextricably mixed. One result of such confusion could be corruption, although there is no evidence of any particular scandals in mid-nineteenth century Banbury. Another result could have been that membership of public bodies exercised an educational function, and that councillors and Board members came to understand why sanitary regulations were necessary. Beneficial developments came not so much because entrepreneurs were free to exercise their talents, but because the town as a community was free to act responsibly. In some areas the powers devolved by central government made this possible. The town was drained, and its new building adequately regulated. In other respects they were inadequate. Private interests made it impossible fully to unite the borough with Neithrop, and fears of taxation, and unimaginative legislation impeded the development of the liberal and scientific educational system which some townsmen saw to be necessary. The period between 1850 and 1880 was one when Banbury was self governing to an unusual extent, and the achievements of those years suggest that its citizens responded wisely to their responsibilities.

Names, Sects, and Parties: the Churches in Banbury 1849-80

'.... almost every sect in Banbury was represented, Unitarians, Methodists of all shades, Congregationalists, Hyper-Calvinists, and church people. Coming up to the Chapel in the conveyance, he (C.H. Spurgeon) had asked me what denominations we had in Banbury. I told him I thought we pretty well had them all. Indeed, it had been said that if a man lost his religion, he might find it at Banbury.' (1)

Banbury's pre-eminence as a market town was matched by the variety and strength of the religious affiliations of its citizens. In 1853 a newspaper estimated that there were seventeen places of worship in the town, while a Baptist minister guessed that there were fifteen. Religious controversy flourished in Banbury like a plant growing in a particularly rich soil in a well-heated greenhouse. There was an element of exaggeration about religion in the town, which illuminates the basic tensions in places where arguments were less openly debated.

The religious controversies of the 1850s took place in a situation of social and political equilibrium; one in which there was much that united Christians as well as much that divided them. There was little disagreement amongst Protestants about the need to contain the Church of Rome, to extend primary education,

(1) Regents Park College Library, Oxford, W.T. Henderson, Recollections of his Life.

and to spread the culture and life style of the bourgeois church member. The privileges still enjoyed by the Established Church were balanced, locally, by the political dominance of the largely Nonconformist Liberal Party. There were two principal sources of religious division. One was related to what may be called social evangelism. While there was general agreement about the desirability of extending the social influence of the churches, opinions varied as to whether this should be done through legislation, the denunciation and confrontation of evil-doers, or a more specifically religious presence in politics. The others concerned the continuing social disabilities of the Dissenters, which, though often trivial in themselves, could be inflated into profoundly divisive issues.

On 19 June 1849 William Wilson exchanged livings with T.W. Lancaster, and was instituted to the vicarage of Banbury, Lancaster taking the cure of 45 souls at Worton. (1) Wilson's father was for 26 years Vicar of Walthamstow, and an influential figure in London Evangelicalism. His uncle, Daniel Wilson, was Bishop of Calcutta, and builder of that city's Gothic Cathedral. In November 1849 Wilson appointed two curates, who, with Charles Forbes, Vicar of South Banbury, made up the

(1) BG, 28 June 1849; JOJ, 30 June 1849; OH, 30 June 1849; R.G. Wilberforce, The Life of Samuel Wilberforce, 1880-82, II, pp.30-34; See above p.93.

largest clerical staff the town had known since the Reformation. Rooms were secured for weeknight meetings in Neithrop, Bridge Street and Upper Cherwell Street. Every Wednesday there was an evening service in St. Mary's. A Church Communicants' Society was formed in December 1849. Early in 1850 a new Sunday morning service was instituted, at which pewholders were asked to allow the poor to occupy their seats. In the summer of 1850 the church ceiling was whitewashed for the first time in half a century, the roof was repaired, and the rotting timbers of the pews renewed. In 1858 the organ was rebuilt and the east gallery removed. (1)
Samuel Wilberforce embarked on his first Lenten mission in 1850, when, according to his biographer;

> 'for the first time for centuries in England, a Bishop has been seen giving to the earnest parochial clergy of his diocese active personal assistance in rallying the lukewarm or reclaiming the erring children of her church.'

The mission began at Wantage, and then moved through Farringdon to Banbury, where Wilberforce arrived on Saturday 23 February, to address 200 communicants in the National School. On the following Sunday morning there was a sumptuous display of ecclesiastical pomp at a five hour ordination service, with a procession to the church of the bishop, twelve officiating clergy, and sixteen ordinands. All 2,700 seats in St. Mary's were filled. Later Wilberforce returned to the church

(1) NH, 3 Nov. 1849; NH, 17 Nov. 1849; NH, 22 Dec. 1849; NH, 13 July 1850; BG, 12 Nov. 1849; BG, 24 Jan. 1850; BG, 15 April 1858.

to confirm 120 young people. At evensong 3,000 heard him preach on 'Death and Judgement'. The next day the Revd. William Wilson, Senr. addressed school children on 'Sanctity in Childhood', and the mission concluded with a ritualistic flourish on Wednesday 27 February at a service attended by 26 clergy and a congregation of 2,500. The townspeople were said to have been deeply impressed by the long and ordered stream of surpliced clergy which passed continually during each day in reverent and earnest silence to and from the church.' An observer remarked:

> 'the counsel and example of the Bishop and the sympathy of many brethren must have left the earnest vicar of the parish strengthened and encouraged to carry out the work with increased energy, and with enlarged prospect of success.' (1)

Wilberforce regarded Wilson with favour and described him in 1855 as 'Good Wilson'. His energy and capacity for organisation closely matched the bishop's own abilities. (2)

In August 1850 Wilson organised a sophisticated social survey of the township of Neithrop. Sketch maps were drawn on which every house was numbered. The names and occupations of householders were recorded, and their religious affiliations indicated by a code of coloured circles. Their children, and the schools they attended

(1)R.G. Wilberforce , op.cit., II, pp.30-34; BG, 28 Feb. 1850.

(2) Bod. Lib. MS Oxon Dioc. Pprs., d.178 pp.44,439.

were also listed. Wilson was an energetic visitor of the poor and his influence was extended by his fifteen district visitors who assembled on the first Wednesday of each month, when alms books were examined, tracts exchanged and the problems of the poor discussed. A ragged Sunday School was established, and the school at St. Mary's re-organised, with meetings for teachers two evenings a week. Wilson was active in many organisations, and was welcomed as the first Anglican clergyman resident in the town to support the Mechanics' Institute. (1)

Wilson donated the site for the new church of St. Paul in Neithrop of which the foundation stone was laid on 24 May 1852. He declared that it was 'for the spiritual good of the poor, to bring to them, where they lie closely congregated, the pure Gospel'. He suggested that the poor had been denied access to the Gospel because the previous generation had turned them out of the church. The new church was consecrated in February 1853, and in 1854 had an average congregation of 360. (2)

The long planned church of South Banbury was also built in the early years of Wilson's ministry.

(1) Bod. Lib. MS. D.D. Par. Banbury a 5 (R), St Mary's Banbury, Lists of Church Officers &c,, Visiting Plans, 1851; Oxon Dioc. Pprs b 70; Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966 passim; BG, 19 Dec. 1850.

(2) BPL, PC, VII, p.51; 27 May 1852; BG, 10 Feb. 1853; E.P. Baker, Bishop Wilberforce's Visitation Returns for the Archdeaconry of Oxford, 1854, 1954, pp.12-13.

In 1846 the parish had been formally constituted, with the Revd. Charles Forbes as its incumbent. A lithograph of the proposed building, known as Christ Church, was published in 1850, when Forbes called for money for the church in order to combat the dangers of papal aggression. Wilberforce described Forbes as 'a good man (very)', but the bishop and William Wilson disagreed with him during 1851 over the boundaries of the new parish. (1) A site was obtained for the church in Newland. Wilberforce laid the foundation stone on 18 November 1851 when he preached on the Gorham Judgement and papal aggression. The boundaries of the parish were formally defined on 2 February 1852 and in September of that year., 'after long and anxious preparations', a bazaar in aid of the building was held at the LNWR station. Wilberforce consecrated the church on 19 February, 1853, but there was insufficient money to build the proposed spire. An extra 60 ft. of the tower was added through the exertions of the Revd. T.J. Henderson in 1880. (2) In 1854 Forbes said his congregation was 'chiefly composed of mechanics and the lower classes who have not been much accustomed to church'.

(1) Charles Forbes, Address to Parishioners in South Banbury on the present time, 1850, Bod. Lib. Oxon 80 637 (20); Bod. Lib. MS Oxf. Dioc. Pprs. d. 550, 22, 26; R.K. Pugh, The Letter Books of Samuel Wilberforce 1843-68, 1970, pp.190, 194-96.
(2) BG, 20 Nov. 1851; BG, 19 Feb. 1852; BG, 16 Sep. 1852; BG, 24 Feb. 1853; BG, 2 Oct. 1879; NH, 21 Feb. 1852; NH, 18 Sep. 1852; NH, 26 Feb. 1853; BPL, PC, IX, p.259; BA, 30 Sep. 1880; BA, 24 Jan. 1880.

There were usually about 40 communicants, and about 55 for the major feasts. By 1860 the congregation numbered about 600, and Forbes had been joined by by two curates. (1)

It is clear that Wilson substantially increased Church attendances. By 1854 there were average congregations of 1,000 at St. Mary's and 360 at St. Paul's, and it was observed that the opening of two new churches had not diminished attendances at the former. Wilson died in 1860, and nine years later an article in the Church Times dated the recovery of the fortunes of the Established Church in Banbury from his appointment. By preferring him to the Vicarage, Samuel Wilberforce helped to turn the tide of Dissent which had been rising in Banbury since the 1780s. (2)

Wilson's energy aroused resentment as well as admiration. Only five months after his arrival in Banbury, he inspired an agitation in support of a Lord's Day Observance Society campaign to end Post Office work on Sundays. The vicar's name appeared at the head of a petition to the mayor calling for a public meeting on 18 December. He

(1) E.P. Baker, op. cit., pp.13-14; Bod. Lib. Oxf. Dioc. Pprs. d 180.

(2) E.P. Baker, op. cit., pp.13-14; Church Times, VII, 1 Oct. 1869; p.363, 29 Oct. 1869; p.417.

opened the discussion by asking if citizens could demand that postmen, their servants, should break the law which God had given, reminding his audience that God could chastise nations as well as individuals. Edward Cobb quietly argued in reply that the ultimate object of the petition was the familiar Exeter Hall aim of creating gloom. The cholera, he maintained, was not a chastisement upon the nation, as Wilson had suggested, but the consequence of dirty sewers which could be cleansed. He provoked an interruption from Charles Forbes to which he addressed a devastating reply. The debate continued but the issue was decided by Cobb's dazzling speech which embarrassed some of those who had petitioned for the meeting, one of whom said 'I deeply regret this evening's proceedings: I do not know when I have spent an evening so miserably'. A former Chartist, argued that the motion was meant to prevent the delivery of radical newspapers. Wilson's proposition was lost in humiliating fashion, only about 20 hands being held up in his support. It seems that the meeting had enabled the bawdy and riotous to display their dislike of the town's respectability. (1) Samuel Wilberforce maintained a lively hostility to Dissent, and William Wilson followed the lead of his episcopal superior. The first major cause of discord concerned the town's two long established charitable societies. In 1850 on Wilberforce's instructions, he refused to preach a sermon in the church for the Old Charitable Society. The Banbury Guardian commented:

(1) BPL, PC VII, pp.81-84; BG; 20 Dec. 1849.

> 'The Bishop of Oxford, not intentionally of course, but not understanding Banbury.... has caused people to fly from the Church.... of all the charities in the town there is not one that stands so high in the favour of all sects as does the Old Charitable Society, and many churchmen annoyed at the Vicar's determination on Sunday last, flew from the Parish Church, and betook themselves to various other places of worship, where the claims of the charity were to be pleaded'. (1)

Wilson also proposed that the Visiting Charitable Society should be managed entirely by Anglicans, and that the applicants for relief who were members of the Establishment should have preference over those who were not. He again refused to preach for the Old Charitable Society in 1851 because Nonconformist ministers were ex officio members of the committee. In January 1854 there were sectarian clashes at a meeting called to raise money for the poor during a hard winter. (2) In 1858 Samuel Wilberforce was so unpopular that his toast was not proposed at the annual dinner of the Banbury Agricultural Association, an unprecedented sleight. (3) While the energies of Wilson and Wilberforce strengthened the Church in Banbury, they also exacerbated the tensions between the Church and Dissent.

(1) BG, 11 April 1850.

(2) BG, 14 Mar. 1850; BG, 8 May 1851; BG, 12 Jan. 1854.

(3) BG, 30 Sep. 1858; BA, 23 Sep. 1858.

Wilson's successor was Henry Back who remained Vicar from 1860 until 1881. In 1864 he was responsible for the re-painting of the church to the designs of Arthur Blomfield, who planned the re-building of the chancel. (1) Back was a Tractarian, and after seven years in Banbury introduced vestments and the ceremonies. In December 1866 he preached in a white surplice, and some of the responses in the liturgy were sung. On the same day his curate at St. Paul's wore a stall and hood. A petition signed by 121 people, representing about 500 members of the congregation, condemned the new modes of worship. William Munton proclaimed that he had used the parish church for many years but could do so no longer. On 19 May 1867 the two church wardens walked out of the service to show their disapproval of the new practices. (2) At a vestry meeting in April 1868 Dr. John Griffin declared: 'It is very painful for many of us to have been driven from our parish church by alterations and changes which have caused a great amount of excitement in the town.' James Stockton complained about young preachers continually turning east, south and north, and said that he expected soon to see them standing on their hands. In 1869 there were more stormy meetings after Back obtained a faculty to go ahead with Blomfield's planned alterations to the chancel, which were eventually completed in 1873-74. (3)

(1) VCH, Oxon X, p.104; BA, 17 Feb. 1881.
(2) BG, 3 Jan. 1867; BG, 14 Feb. 1867, BG, 9 May 1867, BPL PC IX, p.267; Sarah Beesley My Life, 1892, pp.11415.
(3) BA, 25 Aug. 1869; BA, 23 Sep. 1869; S. Beesley, op. cit., pp.126, 137; BPL, PC X, p.11

In 1875 five choirmen were expelled from St. Paul's because they 'refused to twist about and turn about after the example of their spiritual pastors and masters.' (1) Shortly before Christmas 1880 remarks by a curate at Christ Church caused two churchwardens and a sidesman to walk out of a service. (2) Many of those who opposed ritualistic innovations went for a time to Evangelical village churches. There was no great exodus from the Established Church to Dissent in Banbury. In 1873 the average congregation at St. Mary's remained 1,000 while that at Church Church was 500, and in 1880 the Anglicans contributed over 1,000 children to the Sunday School Centenary procession. (3) Nevertheless the introduction of ritualistic practices solidified the divisions between Church and Dissent. William Wilson's career in Banbury had curious parallels with that of his principal clerical antagonist, the Baptist minister W.T. Henderson. Both were energetic, and both were young. Wilson was 27 when he became Vicar, and Henderson was 25 when he was recognised as minister of Bridge Street chapel on Good Friday 1851. He was a native of north London who attended Providence Chapel, Shoreditch, where one of the deacons was William Cubitt, a representative in the plush trade

(1) BA, 14 Jan. 1875

(2) BA, 23 Dec. 1880.

(3) BG, 27 July 1873; BA, 1 July 1880.

for Gilletts of Banbury. Henderson entered Stepney College in 1847, and on the suggestion of Cubitt, who had gone to live in Banbury in 1849, he was invited to Bridge Street. (1)

Henderson worked to reduced the debts of the congregation, using his contacts as a 'London Dissenter' to approach such philanthropists as Sir S.M. Petto. He favoured series of Sunday evening'lectures' as a means of increasing Church attendances. (2) In March 1857 and July 1862 he brought Charles Haddon Spurgeon to preach in the chapel. In October 1863, Henry Vincent, 'as popular in the pulpit as on the platform' drew crowds to the chapel anniversary. (3) In the early 1860s he introduced the Penny Lecture to Banbury,'with the object of acquainting the working class with books they had neither the time nor the opportunity to read'. He preached in the open air and maintained close relations with other Dissenters. An assertion by a Primitive Methodist that Henderson was 'as like a Primitive Methodist as any man he knew' was scarcely accurate, but was intended as a deeply-felt compliment. (4)

(1) W.T. Henderson, Recollections; BG, 1 May 1851.
(2) W.T. Henderson, Recollections; BG, 29 Nov. 1855.
(3) BG, 26 Mar. 1857; BG, 3 July 1862; BG, 8 Oct. 1863; BA, 26 Mar. 1857; BA, 8 Oct. 1863.
(4) BH, 27 Mar. 1862; BA, 16 July 1857; BA, 13 Sep. 1855; BA, 31 Mar. 1864.

Henderson transformed the Bridge Street Church into the most influential Dissenting congregation in the town in the late 1850s and early 60s. He was strongly disestablishmentarian, and took the lead in opposing church rates, asserting Dissenters' rights in the town cemetery, and, ultimately in putting forward radical parliamentary candidates. He was for a time the editor of the Banbury Advertiser. He claimed in 1864 that 'they had won a character as a church. They held the balance in the town in their hand, and had made their influence felt.' (1)

Joseph Parker first preached in Banbury in the summer of 1853 and was ordained as minister of the Independent Chapel the following November. 'From the first Sunday' wrote W.T. Henderson, 'Parker was a sensation. His eccentricities were marvellous, and at that time not at all under control.' Later Parker became minister of the City Temple, and the guest of Gladstone in Downing Street. In 1853 he was a 23 year old, ill-qualified Northumbrian, who had spent just one year at University College London. (2) Immediately after his arrival in Banbury Parker began a series of lectures on atheism which provoked a local secularist to enter into public debate. Parker crushed his opponent, referring disparagingly to his beard, and drew applause from the

(1) BA, 31 Mar. 1864.

(2) W.T. Henderson, Recollections; Evangelical Magazine, 1854, p.101; BG, 10 Nov. 1853; Albert Dawson, Joseph Parker, DD, His Life and Ministry, 1901, p.38

audience who hissed his opponent. He resumed the debate in May 1854 when G.J. Holyoake gave a series of lectures on Secularism in Banbury, following the example of the eminent Congregationalist Henry Townley, who debated with Holyoake in London in 1852. Parker won Holyoake's respect, but some were disgusted by his use of vituperation. He declined a further debate when Holyoake visited Banbury in 1855. (1)

Parker revived the Independent meeting in Church Passage. At a tea meeting in August 1854 he boasted of a three-fold increase in the congregation and of 34 new members. There were 55 members when he arrived in Banbury in 1853 and 89 were added during the four years of his ministry. He preached in the open air in the summer and in secular buildings in winter, and organised educational classes for young men. (2) In January 1856 he suggested the building of a new chapel. Land in South Bar was acquired soon afterwards, and the foundation stone laid in September 1856. The chapel was opened on 3 April 1859 when Park claimed that:

> 'the cause of Congregationalism was never in such a flourishing condition in Banbury. Attendance in the Sunday School is larger than has been known for many years, and the number of members in church fellowship is higher than any found in the records of the church'.

(1) BG, 29 Dec. 1853; BG, 3 Jan. 1854; BG, 25 May 1854; Evangelical Magazine, 1852, p.419; Albert Dawson, op.cit., p.40; Joseph McCabe, The Life and Letters of George Jacob Holyoake, 1908, pp.224-27; Joseph Parker, A Preacher's Life, 1903 edn. pp.248-51.

(2) Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book, 1853-57; Joseph Parker, op. cit., p. 140; BG, 3 Aug. 1854.

He wrote in his biography:

> 'after about four years' residence in Banbury, I could boast of a chapel, a vestry and a commodious schoolroom'. (1)

The new church, designed by W.M. Eyles, was a Doric oratory, with galleries on all four sides, lit principally by a clerestory. It was criticised as 'Independent of all architectural grammar or rules' even before the foundation stone was laid. (2)

Parker, like William Wilson, discovered that the Sabbath question aroused uncontrollable passions in Banbury. In the autumn of 1855 he wrote in a tract on Sunday excursion trains that:

> 'If we thoroughly knew the history of the Sunday excursionists, we should find amongst them the dirtiest, silliest, laziest and poorest of the toiling population'. (3)

He spoke to similar vein in a sermon, provoking a fiery controversy. Walls and shop windows were plastered with posters and squibs, many of them highly embarrassing to other clergy. Since Parker lived on the religious dodge, claimed one of them, he must make a noise, but he was always willing to accept the working man's money. (4)

(1) BG, 25 Sep. 1856; BG, 9 April 1857; BA, 9 April 1857; Evangelical Magazine, 1856 p.661; Ibid, 1857, p.291; J. Parker, op. cit., p.137.

(2) Evangelical Magazine 1857, p.291; BG, 2 Oct. 1856.

(3) Joseph Parker, Short Arguments on theSabbath (Drummond Tract No. 526), 1855, in BPL, PC VII, p.107.

(4) BPL, PC VII, pp.108, 111.

The secularist William Bunton asked in a pamphlet if keeping the Sabbath holy was:

> 'to go like a poor, weeping, wailing woeful being to the crowded chapel, to join in doggerel rhymes and bellow forth what you know nothing of, or listen to some unintelligible jargon about your being a child of sin, shaped in iniquity.' (1)

On 18 and 19 April there was a mock trial at the Wheatsheaf Inn at which the 'dirtiest, silliest, laziest and poorest' were given an opportunity of 'testing the sincerity of Old Joe's motives'. Witnesses included Miss Sarsanet Satinstitch, 'a nice young person, favourable to Sunday trading.' It appears that the proceeding were bawdy, and much embarrassment was caused when a list of those present was published. (2) Crude pictures of Parker were displayed on pieces of calico in the town, and one Sunday afternoon they were waved around the windows of his house. (3) His language had provided a licence for obscene invective well outside the normal conventions of local society. He had inadvertently blown a gaping hole in the walls of Banbury's respectability, and the church-going classes were deeply embarrassed as the armies of profanity poured through it. Like the skimmity-ride in Hardy's Casterbridge, it proved 'too rough a joke, and apt to wake riots in towns.' (4)

(1) Ibid, p.114

(2) Ibid, pp.118-20

(3) J. Parker, Preacher's Life, p.135; W.T. Henderson, Recollections.

(4) Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, 1978 edn. p262.

Like the skimmity-ride, it was not so much an expression of class warfare, ~~but~~ as a skirmish across the boundary which divided those who were respectable from those who were not. The corporation refused Parker the use of the town hall for Sunday afternoon services. The newspapers sulkily shuffled away from the issues. (1) Apart from the secularists and bawdy public house comedians, Parker's opponents included some Unitarians who called themselves the Parson's Street Infidels, and followed the teachings of the American Unitarian Theodore Parker. In May 1856 Parker invited to Banbury the Italian ex-monk Alesandro Gavazzi, who lectured on the evils of the Church of Rome. Catholics hooted and whistled during one of his performances, and Protestants alleged that Parker misled the Italian into lecturing for his building fund by leading him to believe that an 'Independent ' school was non-sectarian. (2) In June 1858 Parker accepted an invitation to Cavendish Street, Manchester, one of the leading Congregationalist chapels in the north, on the understanding that the debts on the new chapel in Banbury would be paid off. His departure aroused some feelings of relief among his ministerial colleagues. (3)

(1) BG, 20 Mar. 1856; BA, 6 Mar. 1856; BA, 27 Mar. 1856; see above p.15.

(2) BPL, PC VII, pp.128-32.

(3) W.T. Henderson, Recollections; BG, 8 June 1857; BG, 17 June 1858; Evangelical Magazine, 1858; p.430; J. Parker, Preacher's Life, p.145; A. Dawson, op. cit., p. 46 Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book, 1857-69.

Henry Hunt Piper was 62 when he moved from Derbyshire to be minister of the Unitarian Old Meeting in Banbury in 1844. His daughter, Octavia, married Edward Cobb, who shared many of his father-in-law's sentiments. Piper's first considerable achievement was to replace the gaunt barn which had served the Great Meeting since the early eighteenth century with a neat Gothic chapel in Bletchingdon stone to the design of H.J. Underwood. The foundation stone was laid in September 1849. The last service was held in the old meeting house in June 1850, and the new church was dedicated the following August, the opening services including a Mozart anthem, chants and a Purcell Te Deum. Much of the cost of the new church, which was named Christ Church Chapel, was born by Edward Cobb. (1)
In 1852 Piper published an Unitarian liturgy, The Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England adapted for general use in other Protestant Churches, which was introduced at Church Church chapel in the autumn of that year, amid the opposition of 39 members of the congregation. Piper's chief opponent was the chemist J.B. Austen, an adherent of Theodore Parker. A pamphlet alleged that 'the idea of a liturgical service and Episcopal conformity rose with the Gothic structure in which they now most unseasonably develop themselves.'

(1) Amherst D. Tyssen, 'The Old Meeting House, Banbury' Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society, I 1918, pp.292-93; BG, 13 Sep. 1849; BG, 20 June 1850; BG, 22 Aug. 1850; The Inquirer, 30 Jan. 1864; Memorial to Edward Cobb, formerly in Christ Church Chapel, Banbury; Order of Service for the opening of Christ Church Chapel, Banbury, BPL, Case M, (Unpaginated)

In August 1853 Piper was openly jeered at a meeting by a cabinet maker, and in October he left the town with his daughter and son-in-law. (1) The Unitarian congregation lapsed into decline. The church was threatened with closure in 1861, and its Sunday School, the oldest in the town, was suspended in 1863. The congregation was sustained only by its endowments. Under Charles Nutter, who became minister in 1865, the decline was halted, but the church never prospered again. (2) The effect of Edward Cobb's departure on public life in Banbury was severe. He remained a property owner and a trustee of the church, and his shrewd, perceptive, humane letters to his friends from London, Bath and Lewes are a source of many insights into Banbury society, as well as an indication of the qualities of leadership which were lost to the town.

In 1852 the Austin family's Calvinistic Baptist chapel in South Bar closed down and in 1854 it was offered for sale. (3) The Calvinistic Baptist congregation meeting in West Bar built a new Gothic chapel in Dashwood Road in 1877. (4) By 1851 the brothers Ebenezer, John and Thomas Wall, the ropemakers, were leading the local Disciples of Christ, who met in

(1) A.D. Tyssen, op. cit., p.294; BPL, PC VII, pp.40-44.
(2) BA, 2 July 1863; BG, 20 April 1865; BH, 12 June 1861; BPL, PC, IX, p.109; A.D. Tyssen, op. cit., p.297.
(3) Banbury Guardian Almanacks, 1852, 1853; BG, 9 Nov. 1857
(4) BG; 21 June 1877.

the Infants School. In 1866 they built a chapel in Gatteridge Street at which Ebenezer Wall conducted the first service. About 1860 there was a schism between Ebenezer and Thomas Wall during which the latter, who was living at 7 South Street, Grimsbury, built a chapel on adjoining land, where he acted as pastor and administered the sacraments. In 1864 the brothers split their business possibly because of a dispute involving Elizabeth Redford, the 'Banbury Female Martyr'. (1) The Plymouth Brethren appeared in Banbury by 1857 when they were meeting in the Temperance Hall. John Poulton, a cabinet maker, left the Congregationalists to join them some time after 1853. By the early 1860s they were meeting in the former Congregationalist chapel in Church Passage. (2) Most Banburians who joined the Mormons chose to go to America. In December 1850 three daughters of Thomas Lee, driver of the Wolverton mail coach, who was made redundant by the Buckinghamshire Railway, were married on the same day. Within a fortnight the entire family with about 20 other Banburians left for California by way of Liverpool and New Orleans. (3) The Quaker meeting remained a small but influential body its proceedings rarely being marked by any event more

(1) Anon (Julia Redford), The Banbury Female Martyr, n.d., passim; BA, 3 April 1856; BA, 12 July 1866; BG, 12 July 1866; BG, 7 Mar. 1864; BG, 14 Mar. 1864.

(2) Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book, 1853-57; BG, 17 June 1858; Rusher's Banbury List and Directory 1862.

(3) NH, 11 Jan. 1851; NH, 19 April 1851.

dramatic than the entertainment of an American Friend, or the occasional dismissal of a member for drinking. There was a steady flow of poorer Friends to Australia. (1) Banbury Quakerism was epitomised by James Cadbury, a tireless campaigner on many issues, including peace, temperance, the British Schools, emigration, the Bible Society, the Mutual Aid Society, the Freehold Land Society, allotments and the Board of Health.

Dr Tandy, the Roman Catholic priest who opened St. John's Church, ~~Dr Tandy~~ remained in Banbury until 1864, when he was replaced by Dr Joseph Souter. Souter resigned from the committee of the School of Art in 1867 when it refused to appoint a Catholic principal. Catholic employers like P.J. Perry, the nurseryman, tended to employ fellow Catholic workmen, but most Catholics worked alongside Protestants, and some held public positions. Henry Neville who died in 1860 was a borough policeman, and also an Oddfellow. (2) The congregation increased, but its growth owed nothing to Irish immigration. The number of Irish-born residents in Banbury fell from 78(0.89 per cent) in 1851 to 68 (0.58 per cent) in 1871. (3) There were 353 in the congregation at St. John's in 1864, 455 in 1873 and 512 in 1876, when 267 Easter communicants were recorded.

(1) ORO, BMM/I/7-8, Banbury Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1854-55, 1855-70, passim.

(2) A.G. Wall, St John's Church Banbury, 1938, p.23; BG, 17 Jan. 1867; BH, 17 Jan. 1861; BA, 23 Aug. 1860.

(3) Table Four.

The chief Catholic lay organisation was the St. Vincent de Paul Society established in 1853. (1) The very ordinary-ness of the congregation was a standing reproach to those who tried to stimulate anti-Catholic feeling. Protestant Banburians might listen with enjoyment to Alessandro Gavazzi's bawdy descriptions of nunneries, or grunt approval when a Wesleyan minister contrasted the prosperity of the Protestant areas of Switzerland with the poverty of the Catholic cantons, (2) but the Catholic congregation in Banbury was not very different from that of other Dissenting groups. Anti-Cathclicism in Banbury was a necessary obeisance to a Dissenting orthodoxy rather than an expression of social realities.

During the 1860s the Wesleyans emerged as the most influential denomination in public life in Banbury. They already had the largest congregation amongst the town's Nonconformists in 1851, but it included few men of influence. In 1848 the church was in 'a peculiar and embarrassed condition', pressurised by mortgagees. Debts in 1849 amounted to £1,800. (3) During the following decades the church moved towards a position of dominance.

The Wesleyans faced no significant challenge from other Methodist bodies. The Primitive Methodists continued

(1) A.G. Wall, op. cit., pp.24, 29; BG, 22 Mar. 1855; BG, 28 Sep. 1876.

(2) BA, 4 Feb. 1869; BG, 8 May 1856.

(3) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 1842-74.

to accept a particular role in missioning among the working classes, and in consequence were patronised and supported by other denominations. Membership grew from 64 in 1851 to 94 in 1871. Outdoor meetings attracted attention every summer. In July 1857 a camp meeting on a Sunday afternoon in the meadows by the railway station was attended by between 3,000 and 4,000 people, after which the Primitives were praised for 'their characteristic ardour, sincerity and simplicity'. (1) The Primitives always gave prominence to women preachers. In 1858 a Miss Buck of Leicester preached sermons in the chapel vacated by the Congregationalists many of whom returned to their former place of worship for the occasion and sat in their old pews. In the 1870s Annie, daughter of Joseph Arch, preached to crowded congregations on several occasions. (2) The Primitives placed more emphasis than any other denomination on temperance. Whenever the Brinkworth District met in Banbury there were special temperance meetings. In September 1866 the Primitives moved to the chapel in Church Lane vacated by the Wesleyans. (3)

(1) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Primitive Methodist Circuit Schedules, 1851-73; BA, 20 Sep. 1855; BA, 24 June 1857; BA, 5 July 1857; BA, 11 June 1863; BA, 25 July 1867; BA, 7 May 1868; BA, 9 May 1872; BG, 30 April 1868.

(2) BG, 29 July 1858; BG, 28 July 1859; BA, 5 Nov. 1874; BG, 16 Jan. 1879.

(3) BA, 7 May 1857; BG, 8 May 1862; BG, 7 May 1868; BG, 11 Aug. 1870; Primitive Methodist Magazine 1862; p.428; ibid, 1866 p.111.

The challenge of the Reform movement which gravely weakened the Wesleyan connexion spluttered weakly in Banbury. In December 1851 the Reformer, the Revd. James Bromley of Bath preached in the town, and in January 1852 'the seceders and ejected from the Wesleyan establishment' began to worship regularly in the Temperance Rooms. (1) The speeches made at Reform meetings were as much political as religious. R.J. Langridge in May 1852 declared that the House of Commons should be reformed so that more men like Cobden, Bright and Hume could be elected, and that working men, the producers, should have the vote. The Revd. W. Griffiths asserted that 'if God hath made of one blood all nations' is Chartism, I am a Chartist. The Bible is full of Chartism', and that the Methodist Conference should not be restricted to the ministers. A Wesleyan Reformers' circuit based on Deddington was formed by 1853, but they never drew significant numbers from the Wesleyan society. (2) A minister remarked defensively in March 1853 that 'because only a few are connected with the work in Banbury, that does not mean it is not right'. At the beginning of 1855 the Reformers were worshipping in South Bar, probably at the former Calvinistic Baptist chapel, but they ceased to meet during that year. (3)

(1) BG, 18 Dec. 1851; BG, 24 Dec. 1851.

(2) BG, 27 May 1852; BG, 29 July 1852; BG, 10 Feb. 1853; BG, 23 Mar. 1854.

(3) Rusher's Banbury List and Directory, 1855; BG, 25 Nov. 1852; BG, 2 Dec. 1852; BG, 17 Mar. 1853; NH, 18 Dec. 1852.

In 1850 the Banbury Wesleyan society had 195 members, 35.7 per cent of the membership of the Banbury Circuit. Surviving statistics do not enable fluctuations in membership to be traced by year, although figures for the circuit are available. From a peak of 642 in 1851, circuit membership declined to 500 in 1857, then rose to 790 during the religious revival of 1862-63, and remained above 700 in 1870. In 1862-63 there were 248 members in Banbury, 31 per cent of the membership of the circuit. By 1883 membership of the Banbury society had fallen to 181, but there were 180 members in the society at Grimsbury, so that the general trend of Wesleyan membership throughout the 1860s and 70s was upwards. (1)

In the mid-nineteenth century it was widely believed that the founding of new congregations increased the overall level of church membership and attendance. In September 1851 the Wesleyans opened a Sunday School in Windsor Terrace, and soon afterwards initiated services for adults in the building. On opening, the school attracted 72 children and there were 103 during 1852, but in January 1854 when it closed, only 13 children were attending. (2) The Wesleyans expanded more

(1) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 1842-74; Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Plan, winter 1862-63; Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Schedules; statistics from Minutes of the Methodist Conference.

(2) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Minutes of Windsor Terrace Sunday School, 1851-54; Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Plan, 1851; E.A. Knight, A Century and a Quarter of Sunday School Work, 1933 pp.10-11.

successfully in the middle class suburb of Grimsbury. There had been services in the hamlet of Grimsbury since 1812. Following the development of the Freehold Land Society estate a chapel holding 200 was opened in North Street in January 1858. (1) By 1862 there were 48 members, more than in all but one of the village societies in the circuit. The building was expanded in 1868 and a new chapel in West Street opened in 1871. It was much enlarged in 1876 and it was anticipated that the Grimsbury society would become the centre of a separate circuit. (2)
The financial position of the Banbury Wesleyan society improved during the 1850s. In March 1863 it was proposed to build a new chapel on the road being laid out on the Calthorpe estate by Dr. Stanton Wise, later to be called Marlborough Road. (3) The foundation stone of the new chapel was laid on Whit Monday 1865, and it was opened on 9 May 1865.

(1) BG, 21 Jan. 1858; 1 June 1871; Barrie Trinder, The History of Grimsbury Methodist Church, 1962, pp.8-9; Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Plans 1851, 1855, Banbury Wesleyan Prayer Leaders' Plan, 1845, (Brailsford Collection); Banbury Wesleyan Local Preachers' Minute Book, 1827,-47.
(2) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Plan, 1862; Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 1842-74; Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Schedules; BG, 1 June 1871, BG, 9 Nov. 1871; BG, 27 April 1876; BG, 6 July 1876; BG, 4 July 1878.
(3) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesley Circuit Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 1842-74; BA, 7 June 1860; BA, 5 Feb. 1863; BH, 13 June 1861; BG, 29 May 1862; BG, 3 Sep. 1863.

The church cost £6,800 and had 1,162 sittings. It was in the Gothic style, with a spire which so troubled some tender consciences that it was paid for from a separate fund, so that those with scruples could avoid contributing to it. (1) The new church was the largest Nonconformist place of worship in Banbury, and architecturally the most fashionable. It fulfilled the aspirations of the middle classes for a chapel which was ecclesiastical in appearance, and provided seating for more of the respectable working class than could be accommodated in another Dissenting church. Nevertheless there was a gulf between fashionable Wesleyanism and the poor, which was made obvious by the founding of two missions, one in Neithrop where in the 1870s a mothers' meeting was regularly patronised by leading members of the congregation, and one in Calthorpe Street where services began in 1880 in a pair of cottages within a few yards of the Marlborough Road chapel premises. (2)
The stonelaying of the Marlborough Road chapel in 1864 was attended by William Mewburn, a railway stockbroker, who came to dominate local Wesleyanism. In 1865 he leased

(1) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesleyan Church Accounts, 1849-73; BG, 5 May 1864; BG, 19 May 1864; BG, 11 May 1865; BA, 10 May 1864.
(2) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Conveyance 18 May 1880; BA, 7 Feb. 1878; BA, 8 Jan. 1880; Barrie Trinder, The History of Methodism in Banbury, 1965, pp.24-26.

the Wykham Park estate, and purchased it two years later. (1) He was born in Cleveland in 1817, became a solicitor's clerk, and subsequently worked in Halifax where he set up an agency for railway shares. He subsequently transferred his office to Manchester. He attended the Banbury Circuit Quarterly Meeting in September 1865, and became circuit steward in 1876. He contributed substantially to the costs of both the Marlborough Road and Grimsbury chapels. (2) He was active in Wesleyan connexional committees from 1858, and brought the Banbury circuit into the mainstream of the denomination. He may have become associated with the Banbury society through his chairmanship of the Star Life Assurance Company, which was the principal mortgagee of the Church Lane chapel in the 1850s. Mewburn made the Wesleyan congregation an object of compelling interest to the community at large. When his daughter married Mark Olroyd in 1871 arches were erected outside the church and at the end of Marlborough Road, the streets were adorned with flags and bunting, and every free seat in the chapel was taken hours before

(1) Methodist Recorder, 31 May 1900; BG, 17 Nov. 1865; BG, 7 June 1900.

(2) Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury Wesleyan Circuit Minutes, 1842-74; Banbury Wesleyan Chapel Trustees Minutes 1848 et seq.

the ceremony. Large crowds watched the arrival of the family coaches drawn by nine pairs of specially hired greys. The wedding was performed by leading Wesleyan ministers who took part in the stone-laying ceremony at the Grimsbury chapel the following day. Seven years later when Mewburn's fourth daughter was married to Robert Perks, a solicitor, son of an ex-President of the Methodist Conference, and later Liberal chief whip, the Banbury Guardian remarked that 'scarcely has any marriage in Banbury excited so much interest.' (1) Mewburn paid off debts for the Bridge Street Baptists, the Congregationalists, and the Primitive Methodists in the early 1870s and contributed to the new Calvinistic Baptist chapel in 1876, and it was largely due to him that in 1873 there was not a chapel in debt in Banbury. (2) By 1870 the pre-eminence of the Wesleyans was widely acknowledged. In 1874 the vicar of Christ Church said:

'The Wesleyans were a wealthy body, and their liberality had passed into a proverb, for it was said that if you wanted money you must go to the Wesleyans'. (3)

(1) BA, 1 June 1871; BG, 25 May 1871; 25 April 1878.
(2) Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book 1876-79, BG, 26 Oct. 1871; BG, 24 April 1873; BG, 19 Oct. 1876.
(3) BA, 21 May 1874.

As the Wesleyans prospered, the other Dissenting congregations suffered a relative decline, W.T. Henderson was succeeded by George St. Clair who resigned after differences within the church in 1869, and became a lecturer for the Palestine Exploration Society and subsequently minister at George Dawson's former church in Birmingham. He told Bernhard Samuelson during the 1868 election that it considered it best as a Christian man to abstain from active participation in politics, remarking 'I understood that my predecessor damaged his ministerial position by a contrary course'. He was followed by a succession of ministers who stayed only for short spells. (1) The Congregationalists maintained a membership of over 100 in the 1860s and 70s, but had five ministers in the two decades after Joseph Parker's departure, at least two of whom departed after discord within the church. (2) The Wesleyans' prosperity was not due entirely to William Mewburn's money. Indeed a cynical interpretation of Mewburn's removal to Banbury might be that he saw in the flourishing Wesleyan society a promising base for his connexional and political ambitions. One reason for the Wesleyans' success was the way in which the

(1) BG, 25 Mar. 1869; BA, 1 April 1869; BA, 20 May 1869; ORO Colln. No. 315, Box 79b; Janet Sutterby, Saints Below; a history of the Baptist Church meeting at Bridge Street Chapel, Banbury, 1973, p.18.

(2) Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book, 1857-69.

circuit organisation mirrored the economic reality of the market town and its hinterland. There can have been no more effective way of becoming well-known in the countryside around Banbury than by becoming a Wesleyan local preacher. Many leading Wesleyans were concerned in trades like grocery and ironmongery which involved contact with the countryside. When Joseph Ashby first visited Banbury about 1870 he was advised to go to a certain bookseller because 'He preaches for the Wesleyans; he'll not let you buy any harm.' (1) It would be absurd to suggest that men became Wesleyans rather than Baptists or Unitarians to advertise their wares, but the strength of the denomination in the 1860s and 70s does seem to owe something to the way in which it reflected economic patterns. The Baptists and Congregationalists moved towards a similar form of organisation. W.T. Henderson regretted that his preaching was not acceptable in what he called the 'circuit' of small, Calvinistic Baptist chapels around Banbury. The Congregationalist minister in 1859 called for a 'domestic mission' to the villages. In 1869 a Nonconformist Preachers' Association was formed to supply village chapels, and links between the Banbury Congregationalists and those at North Newington and Adderbury were formalised in the 1870s. (2)

(1) M.K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1859-1919, 1961 p.27.

(2) Banbury United Reformed Church, Church Book, 1857-69, BG, 3 Feb. 1870.

Such imitation of Wesleyan practices was an acknowledgement of that denomination's pre-eminence.

By the 1870s Dissenters had retreated from the intellectual frontiers which they had at least kept in sight in the 1850s, into a narrow Evangelicism, which rejected modernist Christianity. As early as 1860 the Wesleyans had welcomed the American revivalists Dr. and Mrs. Palmer. In 1877 the Baptist minister John Davies called at a Primitive Methodist gathering for revival as an antidote to'a good deal of intellectual conceit'. It was Davies who introduced the hymns of Moody and Sankey to his church in 1875, an example which was quickly followed by Methodists and Congregationalists. (1) During the 1860s and 70s the Banbury Dissenters increasingly co-operated in missions to the working classes. Even in the 50s, Henderson, Parker and the Primitive Methodist ministers had preached in the open air on Sunday afternoons to an informal rota. In 1860 revival meetings were organised in various chapels on Sunday afternoons. Attendances were said to be so great that the buildings overflowed, and it was suggested that they might continue in one of the Corn Exchanges, or in 'any other building to which those who will not enter a chapel might go'. (2) In 1864 the Banbury Town Mission was formally constituted.

(1) BG, 4 Feb. 1875; BG, 21 June 1877; BA, 22 Sep. 1877; Barrie Trinder, 'Revivalism in Banbury 1860', C & CH, III, 5 1966, pp.75-77; BPL, PC IX, p.45; BA, 6 Dec. 1860.
(2) BA, 2 Feb. 1860; BA, 15 Mar. 1860; BG, 23 Feb. 1860.

It sustained the work of Kenric Kench, a full-time missioner, who was praised in 1870 as one who 'reached a class of people that neither the ministers of the churches nor the chapels reached'. Two thousand attended his funeral in 1874. In 1868 interdenominational services were begun in a cottage in Neithrop which five years later led to the erection by the Banbury Sunday School Union of a mission hall, which subsequently was run by Quakers. (1)

In the early 1880s two new groups drew attention to the rift between Banbury's respectable church-goers and the poor. In May 1880 two Salvation Army officers began to hold services in the Central Corn Exchange. They accused Christians in Banbury of wanting 'order, eloquence and respectability' in their chapels rather than souls, asserting that half the town's population never went to a place of worship and that three-quarters had one foot in hell. As in other towns the Army provoked disorder. There was 'indescribable uproar' outside one meeting and the officers left the town. The Army established a permanent presence in 1888 but not before further turmoil. (2) In 1882 a group called the Apostolic Band began to mission from a room in Butcher Row and the Neithrop Mission Hall.

(1) BA, 4 May, 1871; BA, 3 July 1873; BA 10 Feb. 1874; BG, 15 April 1869; BG, 16 June 1870; BG, 3 July 1863; BG, 12 Feb. 1874; George Warner, A Memoir of the Life and Labours of the late Kenrick Kench, Town Missionary of Banbury 1874.

(2) BG, 27 May 1880; BG, 3 June 1880; BG, 14 June 1888; BG, 21 June 1888; BG, 28 June 1888, BG, 26 July 1888.

They were attacked by hooting mobs and throwers of missiles, and when a labourer imprisoned for assaulting them was released from gaol, 300 sympathisers welcomed him at the station. The Band was determinedly proletarian in outlook and composition. A member proclaimed 'there was not a respectable person in the band - they were all poor people.' (1)

The alientation of the poor from the chapels was as much a cultural as a religious problem. Respectable society in Banbury developed a range of social activities which during the 1860s and 70s became increasingly self-contained within individual congregations. All of the Dissenting chapels had ranges of rooms for purposes other than worship, and social activities expanded to fill them. There was a Wesleyan Young Mens' Association in the early 1870s, and a Literary Institute at the Marlborough Road Chapel by 1879. There were Mutual Improvement Societies at the Grimsbury Wesleyan Chapel and at the Baptist and Congregationalist churches. (2)

Such developments had important repercussions for interdenominational groups, which tended either to cater spasmodically for mass audiences by bringing well-known speakers to Banbury, or to become increasingly

(1) BA, 30 Mar. 1882; BA, 13 April 1882; BA, 7 Dec. 1882.
(2) BG, 23 Mar. 1871; BG, 20 Nov. 1873; BG, 5 Sep. 1878; BG, 30 Jan. 1879; BG, 22 April 1880; BA, 22 Jan. 1874; BA, 26 Feb. 1880; BA, 5 Oct. 1882.

uncompromising cadres, totally committed to particular causes. The Baptist or Wesleyan who might have been active for social reasons in the Temperance Society in the early 1850s, by the late 1860s had his needs met within his own denomination. The growth of chapel-based culture also sapped the evangelical energy of the Dissenters. The young man of talent who, in the 1820s or 30s might have displayed his abilities and courage by seeking martyrdom preaching in the open in a disorderly village, now had the opportunity to shine in a debate at the YMCA.

All of the churches placed increasing emphasis on Sunday Schools in the 1860s and 70s. The Sunday School centenary celebrations on 29 June 1880 proved one of the largest though not one of the most harmonious demonstrations ever held in Banbury. Hopes of an interdenominational celebration had been disappointed, as a result of which the Anglicans, who had met at the National School, marched into the Horsefair en route to St. Mary's at just the time when the Nonconformist schools were assembling there. Much confusion resulted. The Anglicans mustered 2,058 children with 300 teachers, and the Nonconformists had 3,209 with 500 teachers. After the Nonconformist service the Wesleyans separated from the rest to organise their own tea and games. Both processions included children from the countryside. The totals of the individual Banbury schools give an indication of the relative strength of the congregations in 1880. (1)

(1) BA, 1 July 1880; BG, 1 July 1880; See Table Ten.

Sectarian conflict reached its height in Banbury during the 1850s. Conflict over Church Rates which had died away in the 1840s, resumed in 1853, when at a vestry meeting where the Dissenters 'mustered in strong force', W.T. Henderson demanded that a rate of a farthing should be granted, rather than the 3d rate proposed. A poll took place on 11 April when the farthing rate, which would yield less than the costs of collection, was supported by 530 voters, and the 3d rate by 297. The decision effectively brought about the end of Church Rates in Banbury, although it was not until 1868 that they were formally abolished. The language of the campaign was vivid and embittered. 'Show your disgust' urged one Dissenting poster, 'at the shame of mendicancy'. Henderson saw the contest as a means to an end, and urged Dissenters elsewhere to attack the rate through vestry contests rather than by demanding legislation, since such campaigns could 'sharpen the feelings for the battle to abolish the state church.' (1) A branch of the Liberation Society was formed in January 1855 at a meeting called at Henderson's initiative and addressed by the national secretary of the Society. Further meetings were held, but the movement failed to attract a large formal membership in Banbury. (2)

(1) W.T. Henderson, Recollections; BG, 14 April 1853; NH, 16 April 1853; BA, 14 May 1857; BPL, PC, VII, pp.63-70,79.
(2) BG, 18 Jan. 1855; BG, 22 April 1858; BG, 13 Dec. 1866; BH, 13 Mar. 1862.

The controversies over the new cemetery in Banbury had direct political consequences since they involved the Liberal élite. The denominational graveyards in the town centre were closed by the Board of Health in December 1853, and land was acquired for a new cemetery where the first burial took place in October 1853. The abolition of the church rate earlier in the year made it impossible to raise money for the Anglican portion, which had been purchased with £1,000 borrowed from the Liberal miller, Robert Field. In May 1854 a conflict was anticipated, and Nonconformists were urged to show their strength. During 1855 several Dissenters were found guilty of refusing to pay a cemetery rate by a bench of which Field was a member. The Banbury Guardian accused the magistrates of partiality, and an action 'Queen versus Walford' was commenced against the newspaper's proprietor. (1) It was withdrawn on 11 December 1855 as a violent controversy was brewing. In January 1856 it was remarked that the case was quietly being disposed of, but the Advertiser proclaimed that it would have significant political consequences:

> '... the future will bring to light a new Liberal party in Banbury that will educate its own leaders, adopt its own tactics, and time may show that it is strong enough in the event of any change in our representation to carry its own candidate.' (2)

(1) NH, 10 Dec. 1853; BG, 27 May 1852; BG, 27 Oct. 1853; BG, 18 May 1854; BG, 13 Dec. 1855; BA, 13 Sep. 1855; BA, 10 Oct. 1855; BA, 15 Nov. 1855; BA, 13 Dec. 1855; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.81; BPL, PC, VII, pp.99-103.

(2) BA, 17 Jan. 1856; BA, 24 Jan. 1856.

The cemetery problem remained until lobbying by Henry Tancred secured the insertion of a 'Banbury clause' in the Burial Law Amendment Act of 1851. A Burial Board was formed in 1857 which soon became a forum for sectarian agitation. In November 1858 it insisted that the iron railings separating the Anglican and Dissenting portions of the cemetery should be removed. In 1859 the foundation stones of separate Anglican and Nonconformist cemetery chapels were laid. (1)

Religion in Banbury in the mid-nineteenth century presents a kaleidoscope of bewildering patterns. Congregations flourished and declined, controversies arose and subsided and new chapels were built, small sects proliferated. The divide between Anglicans and Nonconformists tended to deepen in the period up to 1880, and was one of the most obvious features of local society. The burial question, and hostile Anglican attitudes to Nonconformity had increased the numerical strength of Dissent by detaching the Wesleyans from their Anglican roots. The Wesleyans were a powerful body, but their ambitions tended to be self-contained, and in the long term they tempered the militancy of Dissent.

(1) Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents, 1969 p.xxxi; BG, 12 Aug. 1858; BG, 8 Sep. 1859; BPL, PC, IX, p.29; ORO/BB/Xii/1, Minute Book of the Burial Board of the Banbury Local Board of Health.

They expected to expand and saw little advantage in directing their energies to bringing down the Establishment. Within the town there were no longer substantial Nonconformist disabilities or recognisable social distinctions between Churchmen and Dissenters, although feelings of separateness were intensified by what happened in the countryside where Dissenting disabilities were still real. Religious militancy by 1870 was more and more the province of inter-denominational reforming agencies, whose energies were directed not so much against the Church of England but at the whole apparatus of established authority, which they saw as corrupt and unGodly. The relative strengths of congregations fluctuated, but such changes were of less moment than the continued dominance of religion within the town. 'Away for an hour with Theology and Politics' (1) wrote the Banbury Advertiser in 1868 at the approach of the Michaelmas Fair, which coincided with the general election. Religion was a continuing pre-occupation, as divisive as politics, and to be forgotten for only a few hours in the year.

(1) BA, 29 Oct. 1868.

Chapter Ten

A Borough of Great Independence of Action: 1850-1868 (1)

'There is scarcely a prospect in the world more curious than that of England during a general election. The congregations of people; the interests called into operation; the passions roused; the principles appealed to; the printed and spoken addresses; the eminent men who appear; the guarantees demanded and given; the fluctuations of the poll; the exultation of the victorious party - it is a scene in which there is much to attract the eyes and ears but more to fix the mind'.(2)

In 1850 Henry Tancred was securely established as MP for Banbury and he remained the town's representative until ill-health forced his resignation in 1858. The by-election which followed his retirement was narrowly won by Bernhard Samuelson, but he held the seat for only eleven weeks before it was wrested from him by Sir Charles Douglas, backed by a curious coalition of radicals and Conservatives. Six years later Samuelson began an uninterrupted spell as MP for Banbury which lasted for the 20 remaining years of the town's existence as a parliamentary borough. These changes might seem a logical reflection of the passing of influence from the professional classes to manufacturing interests. Manufacturers represented numerous boroughs in which their factories were situated. The lacemaker John Heathcoat sat for Tiverton, and the agricultural implement maker E.H.Bentall for Maldon.(3) But politics was more than the choice of a representative to the House of Commons, and the main currents in the politics of Banbury during the 1850s and 60s give many insights into national political moods. Banburians relished their independence and the feeling that they were playing

(1) John Bright's description of Banbury in the House of Commons on 31 March 1859, BA, 31 March 1859.

(2) Edinburgh Review, LII, 1853, p.58.

(3) E.J.Hanham, Elections and Party Management: Politics in the Time of Disraeli and Gladstone, 1959, pp. 41, 55.

an important role in national affairs. Liberals still felt that independence meant the exclusion from the town of aristocratic influence. Conservatives and radicals were concerned to see Banbury independent of the power of its leading employer. Political activity in Banbury was an expression of identity, of the identity of the borough itself, and of the groups within it.

While some aspects of the politics of Banbury in the 1850s and 60s are well documented, certain areas remain obscure. In particular, it is difficult to assess the influence of working class non-electors upon shopkeepers' votes. Many contempories considered that it was a decisive element in local politics. The radical William Bunton told the Non-Electors League in 1858 that they should consider that they might be better off without the vote. Local Chartists were told in 1852:

> 'an elector is bound to listen to whatever you have to say to him upon the subject of his vote, and is liable to be called to account by you if he either sells it, or gives or withholds it improperly and without sufficient reason'.

A member of the Non-Electors' League boasted in 1858 that non-voters had more power and influence than electors, and a Reform Association official sadly admitted 'That is just it'.(1)

Tancred continued to cultivate goodwill in the constituency in the early 1850s. He cheerfully subscribed to such Liberal projects as the Freehold Land Society and the Central Corn Exchange, dutifully supported funds for celebrating peace in the Crimea and relieving the victims of the Indian Mutiny, and left to his agents decisions about the National Schools and the town band. He appointed Post Office

(1) BG, 24 June 1852; BG, 3 June 1858; BG, 10 June 1858; BG, 22 Nov. 1858; BPL, PC VI, pp. 9, 17,; Ibid, VIII, pp. 13-14; John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868, 1966, p.103.

messengers according to the advice of his agents, and occasionally arranged for the sons of his supporters to be made excisemen. He was closely identified with the building of the new town hall in 1854, subscribed £500 towards it, and referred to it as 'our hall'.[1] His most time-consuming service to his supporters was his part in the Banbury cemetery affair. He spent much time in 1857 and 1858 securing clauses in the Burial Law Amendment Bill to enable Robert Field's loan to the Banbury Board of Health to be repaid.[2]

The general election of 1852 was not contested at the polls in Banbury. Tancred saw it as an opportunity for voters to confirm their adherence to Free Trade, but insisted that he would not be bound to universal suffrage as he had been in 1847. Thomas Sidney, a City of London alderman, spent some days canvassing, but did not go to the poll.[3]

In the four parliamentary elections which followed that of 1852, the Liberal Party in Banbury was split. The schism arose from the cemetery controversy. The Banbury Advertiser forecast in the aftermath of the affair, that the future would bring into being a new Liberal party, which would field its own candidate when Tancred retired.[4] The group adopted radical stances on matters beyond the immediate concerns

(1) Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents: the correspondence of H.W.Tancred, 1841-59, 1969, pp. xxi-xxii, xxv-xxviii, 56, 79, 87, 95-99, 116-17, 119-20; BG, 9 July 1857.
(2) B. Trinder, Victorian MP, pp. xxx-xxxi BA, 28 May 1857; BA, 13 Aug. 1857; see also above p.286-87.
(3) BG 17 June 1852; BG, 24 June 1852; BPL, PC, VII, pp. 3,5,7,11, 18-19; B. Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.70-71.
(4) BA, 17 Jan. 1856; BA, 24 Jan. 1856; see above p.286.

of Dissenters. In 1856 W.T.Henderson and others led working class protests against high bread prices, and local practices of adulterating flour. Magistrates were criticised for failing to enforce the law, and a new bread company was formed.(1)

Tancred was opposed in the general election of 1857 by Edward Yates, a 28 year old lawyer and writer, who owned property in Banbury and was the principal mortgagee of Austin's brewery. Yates was supported by W.T.Henderson and other dissenters, and by the Banbury Advertiser. He proved an ineffective candidate, winning only 57 votes against Tancred's 216, but Henderson forecast:

> 'Under different auspices, with more preparation, assisted by better embodiments of the same sterling principles, the battle of last week will before long be fought over again'.

Yates had expressed bitter opposition to the aristocracy, and to Palmerstonian foreign policy. Henderson saw the radicals who nominated him as the embodiment of Banbury's dissenting traditions:

> 'He had worked with them for the abolition of church rates, and was he not confident that Mr. Yates was the man for the people, he should not commend him to their suffrages. Mr. Yates was an admirer of the great Cromwell... they did not intend to take any man's banker to him to tell him how to vote. Let them show to the country that they were not Palmerstonians by following out with heart and hand those mighty principles for which Milton sung and Cromwell fought'.(2)

Yates's late nomination lost him the support of some voters already pledged to Tancred. Twenty four of his voters can be identified

(1) BA, 2 Oct. 1856; BG, 18 Sep. 1856; BPL, PC VIII, pp. 1-4

(2) BG, 20 Nov.1856; BG, 12 Mar.1857; BG, 19 Mar.1857; BG,26 Mar.1857; BG, 22 April 1857; BA, 11 Nov.1858; BA, 12 Mar.1857; BA, 26 Mar.1857; BA, 2 April 1857; ORO 315, Temp.Boxes P,R,O, Austin family papers; BPL, PC VIII,PP.34, 39-40, 46-47, 61; Ibid, IX, p.143; Regents Park College Library, Oxford, W.T.Henderson, Recollections of His Life.

as dissenters, as can 30 of those who voted for Tancred. The Banbury Advertiser complained that Tancred's majority was swelled by 'the rankest Tory votes', but only eleven of Tancred's supporters had favoured MacGregory in 1847. Yates gained 18 votes from those who favoured Tancred in 1847, and had the support of five ex-Chartists, against Tancred's seven. (1)

After the election rumours about the succession multiplied, particularly during the dissolution scare in March 1858.(2) In the autumn of 1858 Tancred's health deteriorated and the solicitor to the Reform Club arranged for him to apply for the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds on 1 November 1858.(3) In the weeks that followed a Conservative, John Hardy of Dunstall, Burton-on-Trent, and three Liberals, Bernhard Samuelson, Gillery Pigott, the barrister, and Edward Miall, editor of the Nonconformist emerged as contestants in the impending be-election. Pigott withdrew on the eve of nomination day, and Miall, who was supported by the group who had favoured Yates in 1857, went to the poll with great reluctance. Ten minutes before the close of poll on 9 February 1859 Samuelson and Hardy each had 176 votes, Miall being well behind with 117. William Thompson, Superintendent of the Borough Police, who had a doubtful claim to the franchise, settled the issue by voting for Samuelson. According to W.T.Henderson he was sent from Miall's committee room to save the seat from the Tory. A conservative described the polling of the policeman as 'one of the most despicable tricks that

(1) BA, 2 April 1857; BPL, Pollbooks.
(2) B. Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.xxvi, 115, 122-23, 147; BG, 20 Nov. 1856; BG, 27 Nov. 1856; BG, 29 April 1858; BPL, PC VIII, pp. 95-100, British Museum, Add.MS 38396, ff.96-97.
(3) B.Trinder, Victorian MP, pp.xxxvi-xxxvii, 123-31; Law Times, 25 Aug. 1860. pp.282-83; Ibid, 1 Sep. 1860, pp.294-95; BA, 23 Aug. 1860; BG, 23 Aug. 1860.

ever was heard of in the annals of electioneering.[1] Nearly 20 years later, when Thompson retired, Samuelson admitted with evident embarrassment that:

> 'I don't know any individual whom I have reason to regard, more particularly when I remember what occurred on a rather "warm" day in Febuary in 1859, for which, gentlemen, whatever you may think, I feel extremely grateful to my friend Mr. Thompson'.(2)

The nature of Samuelson's support indicates a substantial degree of continuity with Tancred's party. He received the votes of 99 who had voted for Tancred in 1857, of two electors who had previously voted Conservative, of seven who favoured Yates, and of 63 new voters. Miall gained the support of 34 who voted for Tancred in 1857, of 35 who had favoured Yates and of 39 new voters. Hardy attracted 52 who had previously voted Conservative, 27 who voted for Tancred in 1857, and 85 new voters.[3] The Times was angry that Banbury had preferred Samuelson to either of the professed politicians in the election, and concluded there were:

> 'too many Banburys, too many family men addicted to eating and drinking and fond of their wives and children, too many men sapping the independence of the £10 householder with constant employment at good wages. These, and not the boroughmongers are the real dangers of our parliamentary system'.(4)

(1) BPL,PC VIII,pp.101,103, 105,107-08, 111,113-14, 118,121, 127,130-31, 145,148,153, 165,179,191,193; BG,29 Oct.1858; BG,4 Nov.1858,BG,11 Nov. 1858;BG,18 Nov.1858;BG,9 Dec.1858; BG,16 Dec.1858; BG, 23 Dec. 1858; BG,6 Jan.1859; BG,13 Jan.1859;BG,3 Feb.1859; BG,10 Feb.1859; BA, 4 Nov 1858;BA,11 Nov.1858;BA, 18 Nov.1858; BA,10 Feb.1859; BA, 31 Mar. 1859; NH,5 Feb.1859;NH,26 Mar.1859; B.Trinder, Victorian MP,pp.121, 124; Arthur Miall, The Life of Edward Miall,1884,pp.217-18; The Nonconformist, 10 Feb.1859; W.T.Henderson, Recollections; Sarah Beesley,My Life,1892,p.85.

(2) BG, 7 Sep. 1876.

(3) BPL, Pollbooks.

(4) The Times, 11 Feb.1859; BPL, Brooks Collection, p.160.

Eleven weeks after Superintendent Thompson's dramatic appearance on the hustings, the voters went to the poll in the general election of 1859. Parliamentary Reform caused Lord Derby's defeat and thus the dissolution, and the campaign took place during Napoleon III's campaign in Italy, which was extensively reported in the local press, but Banbury remained preoccupied with its internal quarrels. Samuelson was opposed by William Ferneley Allen, a City of London Alderman, who withdrew before nomination day, and by Sir Charles Douglas, illegitimate son of the first Earl of Rippon, who was initially the candidate of the dissenting radicals, but after Allen's withdrawl, gained the support of the Conservatives. Both candidates favoured the ballot, an extension of the franchise, the abolition of church rates, and a non-interventionist foreign policy. Polling day, 30 April 1859, saw some of the most violent electoral disorders in Banbury's history. From about 2 p.m. there was fighting around the hustings in the Market Place. Douglas gained 235 votes, and Samuelson 199, but neither candidate dared go to the declaration. Douglas hid in the Red Lion, eventually escaping through a back window to catch a train to London from Aynho station, while his effigy was burned in the High Street. The windows of Conservatives and Radicals who supported Douglas were smashed, as a result of which 32 individuals, 24 of whom were employed at the Britannia Works, were charged with various offences. The younger William Potts, son of the owner of the Banbury Guardian, and the chief clerk at the foundry were charged with incitement.(1)

One commentator estimated that Douglas had the support of 125 Liberals and 110 Hardyites. Another estimated that Samuelson lost only one of his supporters of February to Douglas, and calculated that Douglas

(1) BPL, PC VIII, pp.204-05, 211-12, 218-20, 229, 235, 243; BG, 5 May 1859; W.T.Henderson, Recollections; NH, 7 May 1859; NH, 14 May 1859; B.Trinder, Victorian MP, p.135.

received support from 89 Miallites, 116 who supported Hardy, one who voted for Samuelson and 29 who had been neutral. Analysis of the poll books suggests that these figures were substantially correct. 115 who voted for Douglas had supported Hardy, of whom 100 were reckoned to be Conservatives and 15 Liberals. 30 had previously been neutral, and 82 had voted for Miall. Samuelson had the support of 12 who had voted for Hardy. The relatively slight changeover between the two elections was largely among voters who were traditionally volatile. It is clear that the Liberal, Conservative and radical blocs remained largely intact between February and April, and that the two latter acted in concert, the Conservatives being so disgusted with the polling of Superintendent Thompson that they were prepared to vote for almost anyone who would deny Samuelson the seat. (1)

Within the Liberal Party the new MP and Bernhard Samuelson co-existed uneasily At some public meetings both were called upon to speak. Samuelson was accused of calling a Reform Association dinner in 1861 without inviting Douglas. Douglas became parliamentary agent for the Liberation Society in 1864, a whip for bills concerned with religious equality, an action ill-calculated to retain him the support of Conservatives. (2)

Samuelson declared that he would again contest Banbury in May 1865 as it became evident that an election was imminent. A Conservative, Charles Bell, declared his candidature, but initially Douglas was reluctant to be nominated probably because he was about to enter the Church of Rome. Douglas agreed to stand on 23 May, but withdrew, probably under pressure from the government whip, on 29 June although his

(1) BPL,PC IV, pp.237, 241; BPL, Pollbooks.

(2) BPL, PC IX, p.55, BG, 7 Feb. 1861; BG, 21 Feb.1861;BG, 19Feb.1863; BA, 1 Sep. 1864; John Vincent, op.cit.,p. 75.

supporters insisted on nominating him.[1] The situation on polling day was very confused. Douglas's supporters voted early, giving him a temporary lead, but it soon became evident that Samuelson would head the poll. Between 1 and 2.p.m. the town was plastered with posters,declaring that as an alien he was ineligible. Liberals began to tear them down, and substitute their own placards. At the close of poll Samuelson had 206 votes, Bell 165 and Douglas 160. Conservative posters proclaimed Bell's victory, and he was greeted on the hustings with volleys of eggs as he jeered that Samuelson could not take his defeat like an Englishman.[2]

Samuelson drew his 206 votes from 102 electors who had supported him in April 1 1859, from two who had voted for Douglas, 14 who were neutral and from 86 new voters. Bell drew the support of 62 who were Conservatives in 1859, six who voted for Samuelson, four who were radicals, 28 who were neutral and 65 new voters. Douglas gained the votes of 71 Liberals and nine Conservatives who had supported him in 1859, four who had voted for Samuelson, eleven neutrals and 65 new voters. Support for three factions remained remarkably stable during the parliament of 1859. The radical share of the vote was 29.49 per cent in 1865 and 30.13 per cent in 1859. The Conservative share increased from 24.66 per cent to 31.07 per cent, while Samuelson's fell from 45.85 to 38.80, but with a divided opposition such a share was sufficient for victory. The three shared the support of new voters in almost exact proportion to their share of the total poll: [3]

(1) W.T.Henderson, Recollections;BPL,PC IX,pp.146, 166,171-73, 175,178, 184,187,192,217; BG, 25 May 1865; BG, 1 June 1865; BG, 6 July 1865; BG, 13 July 1865; BG, 20 July 1865.
(2) BG, 13 July 1865; BG, 20 July 1865; BPL, PC IX, pp. 208-09, 216.
(3) BPL, Pollbooks.

	Share of new votes	Share of total poll
Samuelson	38.80	39.82
Bell	31.07	30.09
Douglas	30.13	30.09

On the day after the 1865 election Samuelson's solicitors opened what grew to be a vast file refuting Bell's claim that he was an alien. Hearings began in London on 20 Februry 1866, and Samuelson's victory was announced on 28 April 1866, on which the church bells were rung in Banbury. The MP returned home a week later to be drawn through the streets on a wagonette by his workmen, using a blue and white rope made by Ebenezer Wall. Four days later 300 were entertained to lunch at the Central Corn Exchange, sports were organised and there were balloon ascents. Sir Charles Douglas's supporters condemned the festivities and accused Samuelson of obtaining votes by corruption.(1)

Reformers in Banbury were closely involved with the campaign for the extension of the franchise in 1866-67. A branch of the Reform League was active in the town, and on 19 November 1866 between 4,000 and 6,000 people gathered in the Cowfair for a torchlight demonstration. From Grimsbury came the Ancient Order of Forestors and Reformers from Grimsbury and Northamptonshire. From Banbury Cross came the plush weavers. Reformers from Cherwell marched from Britannia Road, and the Neithrop Reformers from the Vulcan Foundry. The whole assembly marched behind the Reform Banner of 1832 around Banbury Cross and back to the Town Hall where they were addressed by Professor Thorold Rogers, Ernest Jones and Arthur O'Neill. Another huge meeting assembled in the Town Hall on 29 April 1867, a week before the Reform League's demonstration in Hyde Park forced the resignation of the Home Secretary. The official Liberal Party

(1) ORO 315, Box 80,Bundle M, Samuelson election papers;BA, 1 Mar.1866; BG,22 Feb. 1866; BG, 26 April 1866; BG, 3 May 1866; BG, 10 May 1866; BG, 17 May 1866; BG, 31 May 1866; BA, 17 May 1866.

leadership was more in evidence than at the November 1866 meeting, and many allusions were made to the Chartist period, the spirit of the years 1838-42 being credited with the beneficient legislation of succeeding decades.(1)

The second Reform Act more than doubled the electorate in Banbury, and the election of 1868 was less predictable than any since 1832, and, as in 1832, the campaign was lengthy. Parliament was dissolved on 31 July 1868, but the election did not take place until November. At the end of September the former supporters of Sir Charles Douglas, abetted by leading Wesleyans, brought forward William Mewburn as a rival Liberal candidate. Both candidates strove to gain endorsement from Gladstone, and to attract support by identifying themselves with the man they called 'that brilliant orator and statesman' and 'the first financier of the age'. Mewburn retired on 10 November, less than a week before polling day, and two days later a Conservative landowner, from Market Harborough, George Stratton declared himself a candidate. Both Stratton and Samuelson sought the support of the Wesleyans in their nomination speeches. Samuelson was elected by 772 votes to 397, and attributed his success to his Working Mens' Committee. A surviving list of his active supporters street by street, the care which his agent took to arrange for a Wesleyan to speak at a public meeting against Mewburn's candidature, and the ease with which information was obtained from

(1) BPL, PC IX, pp. 228, 251; for the Reform League see Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists, 1966, pp. 78-136; BG, 22 Nov. 1866 2 May 1867; BA, 22 Nov. 1866; BA, 2 May 1867.

Leicestershire about Stratton, all suggest a meticulous standard of organisation.(1)

The Banbury Advertiser concluded that some of Mewburn's supporters voted for Samuelson, some for the Conservative and many abstained. Analysis of the poll shows the newspaper was substantially wrong. Of 65 who sat on Mewburn's platforms, only two voted for Samuelson, 26 abstained, and 37, many with long records of support for Liberal candidates, voted for the Conservative. Samuelson retained the votes of 126 of the 206 who had voted for him in 1865, and gained seven of Bell's supporters, and 35 who had voted for Douglas. Stratton won the votes of 89 of the Conservative supporters of 1865, four who voted for Samuelson on that occasion and 28 who voted for Douglas, including some of the leaders of the Independent Liberal group. The rate of abstention was exceptionally high, particularly among experienced voters. Only 76.71 per cent of the electorate went to the poll. Twenty one of those who voted for Samuelson in 1865 and were still on the register, abstained in 1868, together with 22 who had voted for Bell, and 44 of those who favoured Douglas. Of those who voted in 1865 and were still qualified in 1868, 38 per cent abstained. The 880 new voters behaved in much the same manner as the established electorate. Samuelson gained 604, or 68.64 per cent of their votes, compared with his 66.04 per cent of their votes, compared with his 66.04 per cent of the total poll.(2)

(1)ORO 315,Box 79b, Box 80 bundle M,Samuelson election papers;BPL,RC p.371; BPL,PC IX,pp.270; BPL,Case W, ff.2-4,6,11-13,16, 20, 23-25,30-34, 38-39,58, 63; BG, 8 Oct.1868;BG,15 Oct. 1868; BG,29 Oct.1868; BG, 5 Nov.1868; BG, 12 Nov.1868; BG,19 Nov.1868; Royden Harrison, op.cit.,pp.148-149, 163, 171; H.J.Hanham, op.cit., pp. 353-54.

(2) BPL, Pollbooks.

Temperance was a powerful though not a widely discussed issue in the election. Two important temperance meetings took place during the campaign, at one of which F.R.Lees, the prohibitionist, pointed out that while Samuelson would support the Permissive Bill only in heavily qualified terms, Mewburn was willing to give it 'fair consideration'. John Butcher, secretary of the Temperance Society, forecast that the contest would be close, and that the votes of a dozen teetotallers might decide it. Samuelson totally lost the support of the teetotallers, many of whom voted Conservative.(1)

Banbury in the 1850s and 60s might seem typical of the 'bigotry-ridden small boroughs' to which a Conservative newspaper attributed Gladstone's success in the 1868 election.(2) It is possible to see amidst the thickets of parochial rivalries some indications of the wider state of political and social consciousness of the time. The significant divisions in politics were among the Liberals. The local Conservatives were little more than standard bearers, deserted by the Conservative gentry of Oxfordshire, who could only prey upon divisions among their opponents. The immediate causes of the Liberal division had local origins. The radical group which emerged during the Cemetery controversy in 1855-56 gained momentum and a distinct identity in the elections of 1857 and 1859. By the mid-sixties it was an established part of political life in Banbury, a party, informally constituted, but with a solid core of electoral support. Seventy one who had voted for Douglas in 1859 supported him in 1865.(3)

(1) BG,15 Oct.1868; BG,22 Oct.1868; BG,29 Oct.1868; ORO 315,Box 79b, Samuelson election papers; BPL, Case W, ff. 17,22.
(2)Quoted in Royden Harrison, op cit.,p.184.
(3 BPL, Pollbooks.

Yet the division was more than the result of a denominational quarrel in 1855-56. It was in part a class division, even if the leaders of the radicals were socially scarcely distinguishable from Samuelson's principal supporters. The motive force of the Independent Liberals was the energy of the old working class, the shoemakers, tailors and a variety of other craftsmen. Mewburn's sponsors claimed that he was the candidate of the working men, and he received the support of most of the working class leaders of the temperence and co-operative movements, even those who might have regarded his Wesleyanism with hostility. By contrast the Banbury foundryman was willing to cheer at his master's meetings and disrupt those of his opponents. At every election he contested, Samuelson won the votes of more than 75 per cent of those employed in engineering. The radicals gained much of their electoral support from the craftsmen. Edward Yates in 1857 had the support of 35 per cent of the craftsmen who votes, yet gained only 21.17 per cent of the poll. In both elections of 1859 the radicals polled more than 45 per cent of the craftsmens' votes.(1) Religious differences also underlay the divisions within the Liberal Party. In the 1850s the radical faction was led by Baptists. By 1868 the Wesleyan congregation was taking the initiative, but the group which it led was essentially the same. For many of the working and lower middle classes denominational affiliation was as important a means of self-identification as employment. While those who saw themselves principally as foundrymen enthusiastically supported Samuelson, those who regarded themselves first and foremost as dissenters voted for Miall and Douglas, and supported Mewburn. The denominational division in Banbury politics was never clear-cut, but the care taken by Samuelson's agents to secure speakers of appropriate denominations for particular occasions is evidence of the importance

(1) BPL, Pollbooks.

of religion as a means of identification in local politics.

The Liberal division can also be interpreted as a cultural difference. Samuelson's life-style detached him from Banbury's professional and trading classes. An MP who sailed a yacht in the Mediterranean, was a Fellow of the Royal Society and President of the Iron and Steel Institute could not have the same easy relationship with solicitors and shopkeepers that the unambitious Tancred had enjoyed. He appealed over the heads of the middle classes to his own employees and the working class generally, many of whom saw him as a champion of their interests, a provider of high wages and of cheerful, uninhibited recreation. It was this ability which led others to regard him as a source of moral danger. He could be seen as a patron of all that Banbury's dissenters wished to change in local society. Opposition to Samuelson could seem, however illogically, a declaration of a godlier dissenting identity. Henry Walford proclaimed in 1868 that the return of Mewburn would 'tend socially, morally, religiously and politically to the elevation of the town'. It was suggested that Mewburn's candidature was an inspiration for working men swimming against a sea of temptation. Samuelson's celebration of his legal victory in May 1866 was critised because he enabled large numbers to get drunk and to enjoy vulgar sports like bobbing for oranges. There was no more ardent patron of sober, rational recreation than Bernhard Samuelson, yet it was possible to interpret his easy relationship with his foundrymen, and with the working class at large as an endorsement of the drunkenness and vice which formed the back cloth against which respectable life in Banbury was lived.(1)

(1) BG, 8 Oct. 1868; BG, 29 Oct. 1868; BPL, PC XI, p.10.

In the 1850s the radicals were trying to assert their dissenting identity. They assumed that victory was more important than what was done with it, that the success of the better men would bring about a better society. By the late 1860s the radicals were increasingly identifying themselves with specific issues. In 1865 Charles Douglas had the support of 17 per cent of the drink traders, but by 1868 the Permissive Bill was a major item of discussion, and was alientating the trade from Radicalism. John Butcher said that the bill for him over-rode every other political question.(1) Radicals were increasingly seeking power for what they could do with it.

Many of the radicals of the 1860s saw themselves as members of the working class, and felt a need to identify themselves as morally superior to the bourgeoisie. Joseph Maycock urged Samuelson's canvassers not to use soft soap in approaching the wives of working men, since if they wanted flattery to succeed they should go higher in the social scale.(2) Many of the distinguishing marks of this superiority separated the artisan élite as effectively from their fellow workers as from the middle class. In one sense the artisan radicals of the sixties can be seen as members of a working class not yet completely conscious of its own identity, still conforming to bourgeois concepts of morality, still seeking bourgeois champions like Mewburn, and still dependant on political organisations run by the middle class. They can also be seen as Liberal deviants, without any solid base in the class structure, isolated from the middle class by the lack of common economic interests, and from their fellow workers by cultural differences, noisily storming up cul-de-sacs, slowing the whole process of social change, by subtracting their own strength from the mainstream of the Liberal Party, and by

(1) BH, 15 Oct.1868.
(2) BG, 29 Oct.1868.

identifying that party with a particular culture which could alienate the working class at large. There was much in the politics of Banbury in the 1850s and 60s which was petty, spiteful and parochial. It is possible nevertheless to see in the tangled manoeuvrings of the period two classic political situations; that of an immature working class striving to establish its own political and social identity, and that of radicals, uncertain whether to compromise their principles by allying with a party of limited reform, or whether, by asserting their identity, to risk aiding forces of reaction.

Chapter Eleven

A MARKET TOWN CULTURE

'Future history must relate the progress of the people and the rapid development of popular improvement'. (1)

There was widespread agreement that dramatic changes in popular recreation occurred in England during the nineteenth century. 'A mighty revolution has taken place in the sports and pastimes of the common people', wrote William Howitt in 1840.(2) At the end of the century T.W.Boss, who spent a lifetime in Banbury, observed:

> 'the blessing of sobriety has vastly increased in our midst. In my younger days I have seen many drunken brawls and much fighting in streets, women as well as men being combatants ....The recreation and pastimes of the people have undergone an agreeable change since I was a youth, when bull-baiting, prize-fighting, cock-fighting and dog-fighting and many other cruel amusements were permitted and freely indulged in'. (3)

Changes in recreation accompanied the political changes in Banbury in the 1830s, and recreation-providing agencies were prominent among the voluntary associations founded between 1830 and 1850. The subsequent history of recreation could be interpreted as a continuation of established trends, an expanding provision of rational activities. It can alternatively be seen as a counterpart of Banbury's economic prosperity in the 1850s and 60s, the flourishing, for a limited period, of a lively and wide-ranging culture.

Banburians were judged as much by their leisure activities as by their occupations or the churches they attended. Liberals referred with derision to the drunkenness and gluttony of members of the Old

(1) BA, 13 Oct. 1859
(2)William Howitt, Rural Life,1840. 515
(3)T.W.Boss, Reminiscences of Old Banbury, 1903, p.27.

Corporation. Professor Vincent has suggested that when most working units were small, 'the manual working class was more likely to be united by the leisure activities which it had in common than by its infinitely various occupational experiences'.(1) The prosperity of the Liberal Party in Banbury rested on a broad common culture, and when there were divisions among the Liberals they arose in part from cultural differences. One reason for the emergence of a radical faction in 1857 was that:

> 'the tone of general society in Banbury was but low...the very sports promoted by leading men were of a vicious character, and public houses and breweries were of all concerns the most profitable. (2)

Respectability was one of the essences of a market town culture, and just as a flourishing temperance society was dependent upon a perceived problem of public drunkenness, so a culture based on respectability was sustained by the obtrusive presence of a non-respectable sub-culture. Disorder continued on the streets of Banbury. In August 1857 the police were pelted with stones during a drunken brawl in Cherwell Street. Defendants at the borough court in 1858 included John Spencer, 'an individual noted for his attachment to Bacchanalian enjoyments', who was found wanting a fight at 2 a.m. on a Sunday morning, and Charles Walker, 'a disciple of the same school' who had been shouting obscenely in Bridge Street. In January 1858 when James Sanders, a coal heaver was charged with being drunk and riotous and assaulting the police, he was described as 'an old incorrigible'. In 1851 he had been living with one Elizabeth Hall in Gould's Buildings in Neithrop, one of five co-habiting couples in the terrace. By 1863 he was living

(1) John Vincent, The Formation of the Liberal Party, 1966, pp.77-79.
(2) Regent's Park College Library, Oxford, W.T.Henderson, Recollections of his Life.

in the same house on the earnings of Mary Brain alias Poll Curl, whom he attacked and stabbed when he was drunk.(1) Squalid Saturnalia continued in Mill Lane and the yards. A topical disturbance in 1868 was headlined by a local newspaper as 'Christmas Eve in Crown Yard!' There was a debate amongst the inhabitants about Fenianism, and fighting began when someone remarked that a Mrs. Taylor looked like a Fenian bitch. One participant said 'I don't know nothing about it. We was all drunk together'.(2) Prostitution was very evident on Banbury's streets, and as in York, it was closely associated with poverty and crime. In 1855 fighting broke out amongst a group of prostitutes assembled in the Saracen's Head, including Emma Gray, whose face 'bore incontrovertible evidence of a severe bellicose encounter', 'Big Liz' also called Rebecca Lapper, and Susan Owen. The latter was killed in October 1858 by William 'Badger' Wilson, who had lived on her earnings for 16 years. She had been drinking with a man in the Rose and Crown, a notorious public house in Calthorpe Street, when Wilson pulled her to the room where they lived and beat her insensible. He was discharged when tried for her murder because forensic evidence showed that she had a thin skull'.(3) In 1859 two prostitutes from Blue Pig Yard were imprisoned for an assault on their landlord who received threepence in the shilling on their earnings.(4)

(1)BG, 27 Aug.1857; BG, 30 Sep. 1858; BG, 30 April 1863; BA, 7 Jan 1858; Barrie Trinder, Banbury's Poor in 1850, 1966, p.103.
(2)BG, 2 Jan 1868; BA, 9 Jan 1868.
(3)BA,8 Nov.1855; BA, 21 Oct.1858; BA, 10 Mar.1859; BG, 21 Oct.1858; for York see Francis Finnegan, Poverty and Prostitution, a study of Victorian Prostitutes in York, 1979.
(4) BG, 6 Jan 1859.

The principal centre of prostitution was the Jolly Waterman beerhouse in Mill Lane, kept by Thomas Matthews. In 1861 and 1871 censuses both show that prostitutes, whose occupations were given as 'domestic servant', 'staymaker', 'sempstress' and 'washerwoman', were living in the rooms adjacent to the beerhouse. In 1861 a correspondent of the Banbury Herald complained that in other towns brothel keepers were punished but that 'the bawd of Mill Lane in the heart of Banbury' was tenderly protected. The same year a farmer from Chipping Warden accused a prostitute of stealing his watch while he was upstairs with another woman in the rooms next to the Jolly Waterman, and an underworld character William Lee or 'Lord Raglan' was drowned in the canal in suspicious circumstances, after spending some time with Matilda Smith a resident with Mr. Matthews. Elizabeth Goodwin lured a labourer from Fewcott who had just finished working at Bourton to her room next to the Jolly Waterman and robbed him of his wages.(1) In 1863 the Banbury Advertiser called for the enforcement of the law against the Mill Lane brothel:

> 'one of the principal places of residence within the borough for those ladies of easy virtue who are occasionally denominated "Nymphs of the Pave"'.

Action was not forthcoming and three years after robbing the man from Fewcott, Elizabeth Goodwin, known as 'Banbury Cross on account of her great height', stole a labourer's threshing money. In 1868 Thomas Matthews and Daniel Thomas, landlord of the Steam Packet, were charged with allowing women with bad characters to assemble on their premises. Both were found guilty but given trivial fines.

(1) BG, 11 April 1861; BG, 5 Sep. 1861; BG, 14 Nov. 1861.

(2) BA, 9 July 1863; BG, 24 Mar. 1864; BA, 20 Feb. 1868.

Traditional recreation was a constant reminder of irrational pleasures which could lead to disorder. Most traditional festivities were based on occasions rather than organisations and some continued to flourish. The Michaelmas Fair remained the climax of Banbury's recreational year. May Day was still widely observed. In 1861 the streets were 'liberally infested with bedaubed and decorated ragamuffins begging', and in the 1870s many boys from the National Schools absented themselves on 30 April to gather flowers and on 1 May to display their garlands. Children continued to devote much energy to traditional 'Fooling' on 1 April, and village feasts drew many holiday makers from Banbury in the summer months.(1)

Banbury's suburban wakes disappeared into oblivion in the 1860s. The Grimsbury Wake, held on the fourth Monday in July gained some new life as the suburb expanded. In 1855 the landlord of the newly-built Prince of Wales organised a sheep roasting, a prize fight and a donkey race, which was stopped by a policeman after one animal's side was cut open by its rider's spur. The Banbury Advertiser reported that about a hundred attended, 'principally of the lower orders', and they drank heavily. By 1864 the wake was confined to the consumption of 'much beer and bacco' on the Monday evening, with a few merrygorounds, cake stalls and fiddlers in attendance.(2) The Newland Wake held a week earlier enjoyed no final spasm. No mock mayor was chosen in 1861, although some races took place. In 1862 'only a few remembered and they did no more than drink'. There were cake stalls and fiddlers in 1863, and

(1) BH, 2 May 1861; BG, 31 May 1866; ORO, T/SL/102/i, Log Book of Banbury National School; ORO, BB/XI/vii/2, Log Book of Banbury British School.
(2) BA, 28 July 1855; BA, 28 July 1864; BG, 25 July 1861; BG, 31 July 1862; BG, 30 July 1864; BH, 25 July 1861.

a few races in 1864, but if either wake continued afterwards it was of no consequence.(1)

The celebration of Guy Fawkes Night also declined. By tradition crowds gathered in the Market Place to watch a bonfire and let off fireworks. In 1866 there was sufficient disorder in the Market Place for the ear of the Superintendent of Police to be singed by a squib, but the previous year fireworks were reported 'throughout the town'. In 1875 there was 'only a faint observance of Guy Fawkes'. What had once been a communal celebration in the town centre had become an occasion for optional private festivities.(2)

Prize fighting retained a considerable following. In April 1860 Banbury was regarded as a possible venue for the notorious fight between Sayers and Heenan which eventually took place near Aldershot. Both fighters subsequently appeared in Banbury with circuses.(3) Banburians also supported fox-hunting. When the Warwickshire Hunt met in the town in 1876 it was remarked:

> 'no town in England of its size and character contains so many staunch foxhunters, nor sympathises more with the love of sport'.(4)

The structure of the new culture in the mid-nineteenth century Banbury needs to be analysed separately from its content. There were several agencies in the town whose function was to promote and sponsor performances given by local people or by professionals. Local amateurs

(1) BG, 25 July 1861; BH, 24 July 1862; BG, 23 July 1863; BA, 21 July 1864; see above pp.177-78.
(2) BA, 11 Nov. 1875; BG, 9 Nov. 1865; BG, 8 Nov. 1866.
(3) BG, 10 April 1860.
(4) BG, 4 April 1867.

whether glee singers, lecturers on literature or readers of Shakespeare often modelled their presentations on those of itinerant professionals. For some agencies the provision of lectures and concerts was a manifest function, explicit in their constitutions. For others, it was a latent function, a by-product of activities designed to achieve other ends.

More than any other organisation, the Temperance Society was sustained by the evils it sought to remedy. It continued to attract money and sympathy from a wide range of society, but its active membership was drawn from a more restricted circle. The society had become an institution which it was generally assumed, would provide lectures and organise concerts. Yet its manifest purpose was to do none of these things but to bring about changes in drinking habits. Its inability to effect such changes led the society to demand legislation to enforce its wishes. In April 1852 James Cadbury published a pamphlet on the 'Maine Law', and delivered a lecture on prohibition in the United States. In 1854 the Banbury Temperance Society passed a motion sympathising with the U.K. Alliance, formed the previous year to promote prohibition.(1) In 1855 Dr. Dawson Burns, one of the Alliance's leading speakers, addressed a meeting on prohibitionism, and Dr. F.R.Lees the Yorkshire prohibitionist spoke in Banbury in 1856. The'Permissive Bill', which would have enabled a two thirds majority of the ratepayers to ban the liquor trade from their locality, was adopted as the policy of the

(1)James Cadbury, A New History of Banbury before and after the passing of a Maine Liquor Law,n.d., BPL PC IX,p.279; BG, 29 April 1852; BG, 20 April 1854; Brian Harrison,'The British Prohibitionists 1853-72, a biographical analysis', The International Review of Social History, XV, 3 1970, pp.376, 451.

Alliance in 1857, and became a familiar term in Banbury. In 1867 a meeting was addressed by the Civil War hero General Neal Dow, who, as mayor of Portland, Maine in 1850, had inaugurated the Maine Liquor Law on which the bill was based.(1)

The Temperance Society was also responsible for the foundation of Banbury's first youth movement, a Band of Hope. Inaugural meetings held in 1855 came to nothing, but the movement was re-formed in 1861.(2) The Band of Hope Festival in July became one of the principal events in Banbury's recreational calendar. In 1865 the festival coincided with ~~the~~ nomination day in the election, a means of removing the young from temptation which had a long Evangelical pedigree. In 1866 the Rifle Corps Band led 500 children to the fields around Wood Green where 900 had tea and played 'Kiss in the Ring'. In 1870 tea was provided for 750 children and 600 adults.(3) The winter equivalent was a festival in January which incorporated the organisation's annual meeting.

The Temperance Society was also a recreational agency. In 1866 it sponsored a railway excursion to Woburn.(4) Its lectures were often reviewed by the press as entertainments. The zenith of temperance entertainment was the visit of the American, John B.Gough, who, in 1858 addressed the largest temperance meeting ever held in Banbury. The Banbury Guardian described his acting abilities. The Advertiser reported:

(1) The Alliance, 24 Feb. 1855, p.266; Brian Harrison and Barrie Trinder, Drink and Sobriety in an Early Victorian Country Town: Banbury 1830-60, 1969,p.25; BG, 3 April 1857; BG, 28 Mar.1867.
(2)BA,2 Sep.1855;BA,27 Sep.1855;B.Harrison & B.Trinder, op.cit.,p.25
(3)BG, 12 July 1866; BG,10 Jan,1867; BG, 17 July 1870.
(4)BG, 28 June 1866.

> 'The little man advances to the front of the platform; he commences speaking in a low tone of voice, presently a little louder, and then comes thunder, pealing through the building, accompanied with real flashes of lightening eloquence, striking and lighting up the myriad human countenances before him. On he goes, depicting the horrors of drunkenness, till sighs and groans and tears begin to flow....The "Ohs" and "Oh dears" seem to battle with his own voice for the mastery, when in an instant, the magician changes his manner, waves his wand, and those eyes just filled with tears become full of laughter; seriousness has given place to ludicrousness, and the meeting is once more happy'.

Gough spoke again in Banbury in 1859 and was praised because, unlike some temperence lecturers, he did not abuse those who were not teetotallers.(1) T.R.White, another temperence lecturer, was found less of an actor than Gough but more convincing, and a speaker in 1861 was said to be in the same class as Gough.(2) Many lectures on the theme of self-help were given by teetotal speakers, and the topically named Garibaldi Life Boat Crew who entertained in 1864, were a teetotal concert party from Leamington Spa. By 1869 a Temperance Choral Society had been established, and a Temperance Hotel in High Street was opened by the confectioner Levi Tearle in 1868.(3)

The increasingly working class nature of the temperance movement was shown by occasional testimony meetings. In 1865 and 1867 there were Teetotal Working Men's Demonstrations, and in July 1867 a large crowd at a Temperance Camp meeting heard testimonies by working men. In May 1868 a revivalist from Birmingham addressed an open air temperence meeting in Cornhill. A man climbed on to the wagon used as a platform and asserted that a man was better for his beer. Disorder ensued and the corporation instructed the police to prevent further open air meetings, but in July the teetotallers continued their meetings

(1)BG,15 July 1858;BG,16 Mar.1858;BG,6 May 1858;BG,1 Sep.1859; BG 8 Sep. 1859; BA,25 Mar,1858.

(2) BG, 6 May 1858; BG,1 Aug. 1861.

(3)BA, 28 April 1864; BA, 2 Dec. 1869; BG, 31 Mar.1864.

outside the Town Hall.[1] Increasingly temperance speakers vilified brewers and publicans. At a meeting in 1867 calling for the closure of public houses on Sundays, a landlord politely protested against insults to publicans but was jeered off the platform. A speaker in 1870 insisted that the public house was the half-way house to the hulks and that it should have a red flag outside. Little sympathy was shown by the temperance society for pleas like that of a man who insisted at a meeting in 1870 that 'When a working man was on the road, the public house was his home'.[2] By the late 60s the Temperance Society was confident of its ultimate success and less and less tolerant of its opponents. It continued to be one of Banbury's principal providers of organised entertainment, and to play an important role in local culture.

Other societies for the reformation of manners were of less importance. Anti-Tobacco meetings were held in 1854 and 1855, but no lasting association was established.[3] The Banbury Pure Literature Society enjoyed a brief flurry of activity in 1865-66, commending the Childrens Friend, the British Workman and the Gospel Trumpet, and hoping to wean away the working class from Claude Duval, Tales of the Pirates and Jack Shepherd, but it proved no more than a passing enthusiasm of James Cadbury and the Congregationalist minister.[4]

In the Mechanics' Institute as in the Temperance Society there was confusion of manifest and latent functions. For those who saw the task of the Institute as bringing vocationally-orientated educational

(1) BA,4 Feb.1864;BA, 31 Jan.1867;BG,23 Nov.1865;BG,11 July1867; BG, 21 May 1868; BG,18 June 1868;BG,23 July 1868.
(2)BA,19 May 1870;BG,18 April 1867;BG,14 April 1870; BG,19 May 1870.
(3) BG,13 July 1854; BG,25 Oct.1855.
(4) BA,29 Mar.1866; BG,18 Jan.1866; BG,29 Mar.1866.

opportunities to the working class, its history was one of almost unbroken failure. For those who saw it as an animating agency, with a broad mission to enliven provincial culture, it could have appeared a significant and successful body. The Institute's vision of itself altered frequently. In the spring of 1850 pessimists were in the ascendance. The prospect was 'not a very encouraging one', and the committee regretted:

> 'that there is not a progressive increase in the number of members corresponding to the larger number of the class for and by whom it was originally supported now resident in Banbury'.

In March 1851 the Institute was in debt and its activities were being curtailed.(1) By the autumn of 1852 membership stood at 230, the highest to that date, and in 1854 it was concluded that 'the purposes for which the Institute was established were never more fully attained than at present. In 1857 there was again pessimism, but morale improved following the appointment of Thomas Ward Boss as librarian, and the half-yearly meeting in September 1858 expressed jubilation at the improvement.(2) In 1865-66 the Institute was very prosperous, but by 1867 the committee was again worried about the lack of artisans among the 284 members. The composition of membership in 1867 was:

Clerks & assistants in places of business	77
Tradesmen & manufacturers	54
Mechanics and apprentices	48
School teachers	14
Farmers	11
Solicitors	8
Bankers	6
Surgeons	3
Ministers of religion	4
Ladies	18
Youths under 16	15
Peers	1
MPs	2
Gentlemen without occupation	23 (3)

(1) BPL,MI Mins., 25 Mar.1850, 31 Mar. 1851; BG,28 Mar.1850.
(2)BPL,MI Mins,29 Mar.1852,nd Oct.1852; nd Oct.1854,20 April 1858, 29 Sep. 1858;BG,30 April 1857;BG,15 Oct.1857;BG,22 April 1858; BG, 30 Sep.1858.
(3)BPL,MI Mins.,4 Oct.1865, 28 Mar.1866, 20Sep.1866;BG,3 Oct.1867.

It seems likely that inconsistent views of the Institution's success do not reflect real changes in levels of activity, but differing concepts of what it should have been doing.

For more than ten years the Institute was the only link between Banbury and the national agencies for post-elementary education. In June 1854 it first made contact with the Society of Arts. J.H.Beale, headmaster of the British Schools was responsible through the Institute for setting up a local board to administer the Society's examinations in the winter of 1857-58.(1) The scheme was extended and in October 1864 classes in more than a dozen subjects were planned. A scheme for founding a School of Art was abandoned in 1867 because those involved 'could not agree'.(2) Progress in creating a post-elementary education system in Banbury was slow, and owed more to Beale than to the Institute, but development of any sort was only possible because the Institute existed as a stake to which a sapling system of classes could be tied.

The Institute's role in providing other cultural facilities was vital. It maintained the only public library and reading room in Banbury, which was used by an average of 45 members a night in the winter of 1857-58. It was one of the principal sponsors of public lectures, and of performances by such bodies as the Banbury Shakespearean Amateur Society and the Glee and Choral Union. It pioneered innovations in entertainment like the promenade concerts held at the GWR and LNWR

(1) BPL, MI Mins., 3 Jan. 1854, 20 April 1858; William Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942, p.83; see also pp.244-46

(2) BPL, MI Mins., 4 Oct.1864, 4 Oct.1865; William Potts, op.cit., pp.83-84; Sarah Beesley, My Life, 1892, p.115.

stations in 1851 and 1852.[1] In 1876 it introduced the American craze for spelling bees, although within a few months it was no more than 'a distant hum in the villages.[2] Debates and discussion classes were sometimes well supported. Meetings in 1854-55 were 'sustained with a great deal of spirit', and in 1861-62 there were debates on such subjects as whether machinery was beneficial to the working class, and the character of Cromwell.[3] The Banbury Mutual Improvement Society, formed in 1862, amalgamated with the Institute in 1864, when it was agreed that the united societies should arrange a programme of readings and recitations.[4] By 1854 a Chess Club had been formed, and ten years later that 'skillful and intellectual pastime' was said to be flourishing.[5] The Institute demonstrated that the railway excursion could be a pleasant, educational and respectable activity. In 1854 400 travelled on the Institute's first excursion to Kenilworth, which was preceded by a lecture on the Castle by J.H.Beale. Excursions were then organised every year until 1866, to such places as Nuneham Courtenay, Warwick, Woburn, Windsor, Malvern and Ashridge.[6] Subsequently the railways' quotations were regarded as too high, and from 1868 picnics were organised at such places as Wroxton and Broughton Castle.

(1) BG, 3 June 1852; BG, 18 Nov.1856; BG, 11 Feb.1858; BPL, MI Mins., 29 Sep. 1851; 29 Mar. 1852.
(2) BG, 6 Jan.1876; BG, 13 Jan 1876; BG, 30 Mar.1876.
(3) BG, 13 Feb.1862; BPL, MI Mins., 2 April 1855.
(4) BG, 2 Oct.1862; BPL, MI Mins., 29 Sep.1864.
(5) BPL, MI Mins., 13 Aug.1858, 2 Nov.1854, 10 Oct. 1860, 22 Mar.1865.
(6) BPL, MI Mins., 31 May 1854, 29 Sep.1866, 29 Sep.1868, 9 Aug.1869; BG, 27 Aug.1868; BPL, PC X, p.9.

The Institute was a frequent subject of ridicule. A skit in 1860 drew attention to the coming programme, a drama 'Squabble in the Committee Room', and a lecture Nothing by Nobody, which would probably be postponed.(1) It failed to provide formal education, and failed to reach many of the artisan class, yet its record of innovation was impressive, and the Institute was an essential member of the framework which sustained the town's culture in the 1850s and 60s.

In the 1870s it was faced with competition from a Literary and Philosophical Society, formed in 1875 at the instigation of the Revd. J.Spittal, vicar of Christ Church, after he had remarked, somewhat tactlessly, that it was a disgrace that Banbury had 'nothing better than a Mechanics' Institute'. Most of its speakers had also appeared at the Institute, but from 1877 it sponsored lectures by the historian the Revd. G.W. Kitchen, Censor of Non-Collegiate Students at Oxford, which marked the beginning of university adult education in the town.(2)

Many artisans in Banbury found their recreation through their places of work. Bernhard Samuelson set an example in the provision of facilities. In the early 1850s dinners, picnics and cricket matches were organised. In October 1856 the Britannia Works Mutual Instruction and Recreation Society was founded and soon became one of the town's principal recreation agencies. In 1857 there were 130 members and the average nightly attendance at the reading room and library was between 70 and 90. Officials and the more educated men gave instruction in

(1) BPL, PC X, p.2.

(2) BA, 24 Dec.1874; BG, 7 Jan 1875; BG, 14 Jan. 1875; BG,11 Feb.1875; BG, 8 Feb. 1877; BG, 29 Nov. 1877; BG, 14 Nov. 1878.

reading, writing and arithmetic to those of their fellow workmen who required it.[1] In the summer cricket was organised and in April 1858 Samuelson hired part of the former racecourse for use as a sports ground. Workers were given half-holidays on Wednesdays and Saturdays during the summer, and cricket matches were played between different departments. The field became the venue for an annual works fete, in which the works brass band, founded in 1857, always took part.[2] In 1869 new playing fields were acquired near the Great Western Railway, and the old ground was made available for wider use by the landlord of the Cricketers beer-house on its perimeter.[3] In 1866 the Recreation Society organised the public celebrations of the coming of age of Samuelson's eldest son. In the 1870s the society promoted annual railway excursions. In 1877 some 700 went to Portsmouth, some of whom had never seen the sea. There was astonishment in 1878 that after leaving Banbury at 6.40 a.m., 800 people could be afloat off the Needles by lunchtime. In 1880 1,200 set out for Weymouth, where they inspected Samuelson's yacht, and cheered while passing H.B.Samuelson's constituency at Frome.[5]

Other employers imitated Samuelson's provision of recreational activities, but none had the resources to match his achievements. In 1870 the Royal Show in Oxford was visited by 600 from the Britannia Works, 200 from Barrow's foundry, and parties from Harman and Bryden's

(1) BG,24 Jan.1850;BG, 9 Jan.1851;BG, 2 Sep.1852; BG, 5 Aug.1852; BG, 9 Sep. 1852; BG, 24 Sep.1852; BG, 9 April 1857;
(2)BG,1 April 1858;BG,8 April 1858;BG,13 May 1858;BG,20 May 1858;BG, 8 July 1858;BG,12 Aug.1858;BG 2Sep.1858;BA, 1 Oct.1857;BA,12 Aug.1858.
(3) BA, 27 Feb.1868; BA, 25 Mar.1869.
(4) BG, 4 Oct.1866.
(5) BG,20 July 1876; BG, 30 Aug.1877; BG,22 Aug. 1878;BG, 26 Aug.1880.

and Hunt Edwards breweries, and the gasworks.[1] Some workers doubtless preferred to take their recreation in public houses and chapels, and many were employed by concerns too small to organise even a cricket team, yet the role of the workplace as a recreational agency was significant. Such activities could ease class tensions within the workplace, but by separating occupational groups, they could have sharpened class differences in the community at large.

The friendly societies were long-established providers of recreation. The older and smaller societies took part in the Club Day celebrations which gradually declined. In 1867 only two clubs took part in the church parade, which had been abandoned by 1870. Nevertheless the first week in July was still a time for general festivities. In 1867, 1868 and 1869 the headmaster of the National School remarked that few children had attended throughout the week.[2] Societies which had never paraded to church also celebrated in Club week, among them the Tradesmen's Benefit Society, an almost secret body, and reputedly the richest society in the town,[3] the United Britons, founded in 1850, who did not meet in public houses, and had 134 members in 1866, and the Mutual Aid Society, which also eschewed licensed premises and had 400 members in the mid-1870s.[4]

The most flamboyant friendly societies were the affiliated orders. The first Foresters lodge in Banbury was formed at the Prince of Wales, Grimsbury in 1856. In 1859 its members processed in costume on Club Day and then held an archery competition.

(1)BG, 21 July 1870; BG, 28 July 1870; Banbury Beacon, 29 July 1870.
(2)BG, 4 July 1867; BA, 4 July 1867; ORO, T/SL/102/i, Log Book of Banbury National School.
(3)BG, 9 July 1857; BG 8 July 1852; BG, 8 July 1858; BG, 7 July 1859; BA, 7 July 1850.
(4)BG, 5 July 1866; BG, 28 Sep. 1876.

In 1861 members dressed in Lincoln Green accompanied Will Scarlet, Friar Tuck and Little John to Banbury Cross, with a Lady on a White Horse who gave away Banbury Cakes. At their dinner on Club Day in 1865 members wearing green scarves were regaled by the band of the Rifle Corps.(1) The Oddfellows, by tradition, did not celebrate on Club Day, but held their annual festivals at Michaelmas, until, in 1866 it was announced that they would dine on the first Tuesday in July. In 1869 the Oddfellows and Foresters jointly organised a fete.(2) While the older friendly societies played a diminishing role in the community, the affiliated orders became important recreational agencies. In 1858 the Oddfellows had a cricket team, and in 1860 they organised a railway excursion to a grand Gala for the Order of Berkhampsted and promoted a ball. In 1868 the Foresters went by train to a national fete at the Crystal Palace.(3)

The Co-operative Society was also a recreational agency. Formed in 1866, it held its first annual soirée in December of that year. Various lectures and a library were provided, and in the 1870s the movement became one of the most lively cultural bodies in Banbury.(4)

The Volunteer Movement was also a provider of recreation. A local Rifle Corps was founded in 1859 drawing support from Liberals

(1) BG,30 June 1859; BG, 7 July 1850; BG, 27 June 1861; BG, 3 July 1862; BG, 6 July 1865.
(2) BG, 8 July 1852; BG, 21 June 1866; BG, 5 July 1866; BA, 24 June 1869; BA, 8 July 1869.
(3) BG, 1 July 1858; BG, 29 July 1858; BA, 2 Feb. 1860; BA, 21 June 1860; BA, 13 Aug. 1868.
(4) W.H.Lickorish, Our Jubilee Story, or Fifty Years of Co-operation in Banbury and the Neighbourhood, 1916, passim.

like the Cobbs, the Pottses and William Munton as well as landed gentlemen. This was a time when the Volunteer movement benefitted from the co-incidence of wealth, youth and the middle class, 66.5 per cent of the force being recruited from the professional and trading classes. A second company was formed from 91 men from the Britannia Works whose services were offered by Bernhard Samuelson in May 1860, while local farmers' sons formed the 1st Oxfordshire Light Horse Volunteers. The Rifle Corps organised a ball in 1866, its band gave concerts, and it had a football team. When it appeared in a review at Oxford in 1863, 1200 Banburians travelled to see it, and attendance at schools was much reduced. In 1865 the band travelled on the Mechanics' Institute excursion train to Malvern, and serenaded dining Foresters. In 1866 it took part in the Band of Hope Festival.(1) The volunteer movement was an integral part of the town community and an important contributor to its culture.

Banbury's new town hall, opened in 1854 was one of several new meeting places. Conservatives opposed the project because, they argued, the town could not afford premises unconnected with business. When it was opened, Henry Tancred commended it as 'typical of the progress, prosperity and independence of the town' and because he favoured 'scientific pursuits, rational amusements and recreation'.(2) Both of the Corn Exchanges opened in 1857 were intended for recreational purposes, the specifications for the Cornhill Exchange demanding that 'it must be so constructed

(1) BG,26 May 1859; BG, 4 Jan.1866; BG,2 Aug.1866;BG,11 Oct.1866; BG,26 June 1863;BG,22 June 1865;BG,12 July 1866;BPL,PC IX,p.56;ORO T/SL/102/i, Long Book of Banbury National School; Ian Beckett,'The Amateur Military Tradition; new tasks for the local historian', Local Historian,XIII,8, 1979, pp. 476-81.

(2) BG,31 Oct.1850;BG,15 Jan.1852;BG,26 Oct.1854;Barrie Trinder, A Victorian MP and his Constituents,1969, p.xxvi.

as to be adapted to the use of a concert or lecture room, for dinner parties or balls'.[1] These three buildings, with various chapel schoolrooms and the Vicarage Hall, freed recreation in Banbury from dependence upon public houses.

Organisations like the Mechanics Institute and the Rifle Corps were agencies for the provision of culture. The new buildings were venues where new activities could take place. An essential element in the content of market town culture was the public lecture. In 1859 the Banbury Advertiser observed:

> 'the working classes now enjoy opportunities of hearing lectures, amusing or instructive as the case may be, of which their grandfathers never dreamed'.

Previously, said the editor, lectures were given only to students or to thosealready learned, but now they were available for all.[2] In the 1850s and 60s the popular press enabled lecturers to gain national reputations, and the railway system took them to all parts of the country. 'There were giants in the earth in those days' wrote one organiser of lectures.[3] By 1860 there was usually at least one public lecture a week in Banbury except at the height of summer.

One of the most popular speakers was Henry Vincent, Chartist candidate in 1841, and subsequently 'a lecturer on Civil and Religious Liberty, the Commonwealth and other subjects'. His biographer remarked that at the start of Vincent's career, 'lectures were only just gaining popularity in the sense of instructive addresses'. Vincent was a speaker of unusual ability:

(1) BG, 24 Nov. 1856; BA, 16 April 1857; see above pp.214-15.
(2) BA, 13 Oct. 1859.
(3) W.H.Lickorish, op.cit., see above p.171.

> '..With a fine mellow, flexible voice, a florid complexion, and, excepting in intervals of passion, a most winning expression, he had only to present himself in order to win all hearts over to his side. His attitude was perhaps the most easy and graceful of any popular orator of the time. For fluency of speech he rivalled all his contempories...His rare powers of imitation irresistibly drew peals of laughter from the gravest audience'. (1)

Vincent often called Banbury his first love. He lectured there several times in the 1840s, and on at least eight different occasions between 1856 and 1866.(2) George Dawson, minister of the Unitarian Church of the Saviour in Birmingham, was described by Charles Kingsley as 'the great*est* talker in England'. He lectured in Banbury on at least nine occasions between 1856 and 1869. In 1858 a newspaper commented that a poster saying 'George Dawson at the Town Hall this evening' was sufficient to bring in a large audience, such was his reputation'.(3)

Many other nationally famous lecturers appeared in Banbury. In February 1851 Albert Smith gave his lantern lecture on the Overland Mail, first given in London in May 1850, which included an imitation of a conversation at the pyramids between an Englishman and an Arab.(4) Henry Russell who presented a musical lantern lecture, 'The Far West or the Emigrant's Progress from the Old World to the New' in 1854, was a singer who had spent eight years in America, and was the author of 'There's a Good Time coming boys', which was particularly popular among Banbury's Liberals.(5) The former Chartist Arthur O'Neill, minister of the Zion Baptist Church, Birmingham, lectured in 1858 and 1869, and another ex-Chartist, Thomas

(1) William Dorling, Henry Vincent, 1879, p.31; R.C.Gammage, The History of the Chartist Movement, 1969 edn., pp.401, 411; BG, 14 May 1863.
(2) BA, 12 Dec. 1860; see above p.171.
(3) Asa Briggs, Victorian Cities, 1968 edn., pp.195-200; BA, 21 Oct.1858.
(4) NH, 1 Feb.1851; Illustrated London News, 8 June 1850, p.413.
(5) BG, 3 Mar. 1854; BG, 13 April 1854.

Cooper, lectured and preached in Banbury in 1867 and 1868.[1] George Grossmith, the Times journalist who became one of the most celebrated speakers in England lectured in Banbury in 1858 on 'Pickings from Pickwick', and when he gave more talks in 1859 his mimicry was strongly commended.[2] Many distinguished Americans spoke in Banbury, among them John B.Gough, Neal Dow, Elihu Burrit, the 'learned blacksmith' from Connecticut, who lectured in 1852 and 1865, and Phineas T.Barnum, promotor of Tom Thumb and Jenny Lind, who spoke on 'Money Making' in 1859.[3] It is some indication of the cultural vitality of market towns in this period that Banbury was able to attract the most celebrated lecturers of the time, including those from abroad.

The successful lecture was not just an academic discourse. Its purpose might be to instruct. It was certainly to amuse and to provide a talking point. In 1859 Gough's lecture, along with an agricultural exhibition and an excursion to Weymouth, was considered a subject on which Magistrates might gossip if there were no cases.[4] The successful lecturer was a dramatic actor, like Gavazzi, a mimic like Gough, Vincent, or Albert Smith, and he might sing, or lead his audience in singing. Some depended on slides or 'dissolving views'. In 1855 and 1858 Emphraim Hutchings, a Banburian who was secretary of the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, organised displays on English Cathedrals, Swiss scenery and the Holy Land. 'No exhibition ever shown in Banbury before can at all compare with this, combining as it does, much instruction with a great deal of pleasure', remarked one spectator.[5] Lectures were

(1)BA,28 Oct.1869;BA, 28 May 1868;BG, 18 Feb.1858; BG, 28 May 1868.
(2) BG, 25 Nov.1858.
(3)BG,8 April 1852;BG, 2 Nov.1865;BG,17 Feb.1859; BG, 24 Feb.1859.
(4)W.P.Johnson, A Stranger's Guide through Banbury, 1859, p.6.
(5) BG, 13 Mar.1855; BG, 15 April 1858.

critically reviewed. In 1853 a Dr. Walsh spoke on American Slavery, but merely took advantage of the popular interest in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. A newspaper commented:

> 'it is quite probable that the same person has, within no long space of time, exerted his talents upon Chartism, Peace, Temperance, Mesmerism, Bloomerism, or any other subject that might happen to be uppermost in the public mind....unprincipled adventurers are Uncle Toming it in all directions, both from the Press and the Platform'.(1)

The lecture might teach the citizen of the market town something of India, the Holy Land or Australia, and in particular of America. Many Banburians must have considered emigrating on the basis of what they learned from lectures. America symbolised ambition and enterprise. 'Do you intend Tambourlain to represent earthquakes and volcanoes?' asked Dorothea in George Eliot's Middlemarch. 'O Yes', replied Will Ladislaw, 'and migrations of races and clearings of forests - and America and the steam engine'.(2) Matthew Gompertz's 'Panorama of the Eastern Wars', displayed views of the Crimean War in 1855.(3) The American Civil War was illustrated in his Panorama of the Great War of the Western World' in 1863.(4) In 1860 Barker's 'Panorama of Southern Africa' displayed the discoveries of Dr. Livingstone.(5) Many people knew Dickens through George Grossmith, Defoe through George Dawson, or Charlotte Bronte through Gerald Massy, just as in the twentieth century they may be acquainted with literature only through television. Popular lecturers propounded a broadly accepted view of self help. Many lectures were essentially on this theme.

(1) BG, 18 Nov. 1853.
(2) George Eliot, Middlemarch, 1965 edn., p.246.
(3) BG, 14 June, 1855.
(4) BG, 10 Mar.1863; BG, 28 May 1863.
(5) BA, 2 Feb. 1860.

A Dr. Brindley who lectured in 1857 on Benjamin Franklin and Lord Chancellor Campbell, offered to the working class 'direction and guidance in self-culture and self-advancement, or Gold Mines at Home that everyone may dig in'.[1] Vincent in 1859 drew attention to 'the nobby young man in a draper's or a grocer's or a bank, with £50 a year and the chance of a roise' who might be a future employer. 'God always blessed industry and economy' he declared, 'and the laws of nature would not be suspended to suit dandies, idlers, profligates or even "nice young men"'.[2] If small towns were influenced by famous lecturers, they also influenced what such speakers said. The message of the majority was much the same, that individual enterprise was to be commended, that virtue resided in the provinces, among the middle and respectable working classes, but not among the idle, the rich and the disreputable, and that beyond the shores of England were territories, less hidebound by aristocratic vice, where townspeople might find outlets for their talents. By the 1870s the public lecture was in decline. Only a small and elderly audience heard Vincent quote Cromwell's warning that English cannon might be heard in the Vatican during his last lecture in Banbury in 1874.[3] While a few lectures did attract large audiences in the seventies, Banbury's intellectual entertainment was increasingly provided in a denominational context.

Music was another element in market town culture which was sometimes provided by local talent and sometimes by professionals. Musical societies in Banbury were essentially performing associations, usually giving concerts under the patronage of the recreational agencies. William Wilson's Vicarage Hall was the meeting place of the Glee and

(1) BG,16 April 1857; BA, 2 April 1857.

(2) BG, 27 Oct. 1859.

(3) BA,13 Feb.1873; 16 Oct.1873; BG,13 Feb.1873; BA, 16 Oct.1873.

and Madrigal Union, which later amalgated with a group of church choir members to form the Glee and Choral Union with one director for sacred and another for secular music. It gave concerts sponsored by the Mechanics' Institute and performed before 1,700 people in celebration of the Royal Wedding in 1858. In the 1860s the Minstrels fashion affected Banbury and a group called the Banbury Christies Minstrels was formed, named after Frederick Burgess's Christy Minstrels in London. Brass bands were sponsored by the Britannia Works and the Rifle Corps, and there was a town band in addition.(1) Among the musicians who appeared in Banbury were Sam Cowell, the 'king of English comic vocalists', who visited the town three times between 1857 and 1862,(2) W.S.Woodin with his 'Carpet Bag and Sketch Book' and other presentations,(3) Dr. Mark and His Little Men, who performed in Banbury four times between 1858 and 1864, the Brousil Family, Sims Reeves and George Buckland.(4) In the late 1860s and early 70s severaloperatic companies appeared in Banbury. Stanley Betjeman's English (or London) Opera Company performed several times, their last visit being in 1876.(5) About the 1860s many itinerant groups of minstrels appeared, some of whom were very indifferent performers.(6)

(1) BG, 5 Feb.1857;BG,3 April 1857;BG,17 Sep.1857; BG,21 Jan.1858; BG,11 Feb.1858;BG,30 April 1858;BG,24 Dec.1868; BA, 18 Feb. 1858; BH,6 Mar.1862; B.Trinder, Victorian MP, p.116.

(2)BG,17 Dec.1857; BG,20 Jan.1859; BA, 20 Jan.1857.

(3)BG,1 April 1857;BG,27 Feb.1862;BG, 3 Nov.1864; BH, 13 Mar.1862.

(4) BG, 9 Mar. 1861; BG, 15 Dec. 1850. BG, 3 Dec. 1868.

(5) BG, 19 Jan.1871; BG, 15 Aug.1872; BA, 7 Jan.1869.

(6 BG,29 April 1858;BG,24 April 1862; BA, 22 April 1868;BA,12 July 1860; BA, 8 Nov.1860; BA,19 July 1860.

The best known circuses visited Banbury, often for the Michaelmas Fair. Wombwell's Menagerie was in the town on at least eight occasions between 1850 and 1870.(1) Howe and Cushing's American circus visited Banbury four times between 1858 and 1863.(2) Lord George Sanger's circus made at least five visits.(3) Another entertainer of national standing was Gyngel of Vauxhall, who gave firework displays in 1850 and 1857, the latter including a representation of the ascent of Mont Blanc.(4)

Recreational activities like circuses and fairs conveyed a considerable amount of information. Ginnett's Monstre Cirque de Paris in 1855 presented an embarrassingly bad representation of the Battle of Alma. Henglers Circus in 1858 included scenes from the Indian Mutiny. In 1855 engravings of the storming of Sebastopol were sold at two for a penny at the Michaelmas Fair. Another topical theme was represented by a cheap John selling pictures from Uncle Tom's Cabin from originals by Michaelangelo.(5) In 1856 peep shows offered 'all the Russian battles' as well as William Palmer, the Rugeley poisoner. In 1861 'a very important engagementof the present American War was truthfully represented by scenery which has performed the same good office for the Battle of Waterloo, the Crimean, Indian and Chinese Wars'. In 1862 there was an exhibition

(1)BG,24 Oct.1850;BG,17 Aug.1854;BG,26 Sep.1861;BG, 9 Oct.1862;BG,17 Sep. 1868; BA,26 June 1856; BA,9 Oct.1858; BA,11 Oct.1866; BA, 20 Oct.1870.
(2) BG,30 Sep.1858; BA, 21 July 1850; BA, 1 Nov.1860;BA, 8 Nov.1860. BA, 28 May 1863.
(3)BG,25 Oct 1855; BA,21 Oct.1858; BA,16 Aug.1860; BA i Oct 1863;BA,25 Aug. 1869.
(4) BG, 17 Jan. 1850; BG, 8 Jan. 1857.
(5) BG, 5 July 1865;BG, 25 Oct.1855; BG, 22 Sep. 1858.

of the battles of Garibaldi. By 1868 'stereoramas' were depicting events from the death of Abel to the Abergele railway disaster.(1)

There were no well-established theatrical societies comparable with the Glee and Choral Union, although the Banbury Shakespearean Amateur Society performed 'The Mistletoe Bough' in 1851, the 'gentlemen amateur actors' put on two plays in 1860, and Shakespeare's Tercentenary was celebrated with music and readings in 1864.(2) Henry Jackman died in 1852, but his company continued under the direction of his son and son-in-law who visited Banbury for a spring season every year until 1863 when the company was wound up.(3) Travelling companies like Holloway's Theatre occasionally visited Banbury in the sixties, and in the seventies Sarah Thorne paid regular visits with her pantomime company. Dramatic readings, particularly from Shakespeare, were popular. Among the professional readers who appeared in Banbury were Mrs. Ormonde, R.K.Lucas and Barrow Blake.(4) The theatre depended upon patronage by recreational agencies like the Mechanics' Institute, the Rifle Corps and the Cricket Club, and like other entertainments, it provided topical information. In 1854 Jackman's company presented Uncle Tom's Cabin and in 1861 they staged Garibaldi, the Hero of Italy, or a Struggle for Freedom.(5)

The flower show, first organised in 1847 drew steadily greater crowds, and was described in 1866 as 'one of our greatest holidays'.

(1) BA,23 Oct.1856;BA,20 Oct. 1868; BG,24 Oct. 1861; BG, 16 Oct.1862.
(2)BG,18 Nov.1856;BG, 5 April,1860;BA,7 April 1864; BA, 14 April 1864.
(3) Lou Warwick, Theatre Un-Royal,1974, pp.176-79, 187; BG, 22 Jan. 1853; BG, 29 Jan. 1853; BG, 5 Feb. 1863.
(4) BG, 18 May 1859;BG, 3 May 1866; BG,17 Sep.1868; BG,10 Aug.1854; BG, 3 May 1855; BG, 6 Jan.1876;BG, 19 Feb.1880; BH,25 June 1863; BH,27 Mar.1862; BA, 13 Dec.1855.
(5) BH, 14 Mar.1861; BG,2 Feb.1854; BG,22 Jan.1863; BG, 29 Jan. 1863; BG, 5 Feb. 1863.

'Why?' asked the Banbury Guardian in 1856,

> 'do we thus rejoice and give all the support in our power to Flower Shows? Simply because Floriculture and Horticulture, while being a health-giving is also a pure and harmless recreation, which may be engaged in by individuals of either sex and all stations of life - the peasant as well as the peer, the over-toiled man of business, and the industrious artisan, on every imaginable scale, from a single flower pot to a princely conservatory; and which, by leading to the tranquil contemplation of natural beauty, and diverting the mind from grave worldly occasions, has a positively moral and therefore highly beneficial tendency. Even our sovereign with her Royal Consort, may be seen at Osborne, with garden implements, tending and cultivating the flowers upon which she looks down from her palace windows and terraces'.

In 1863 the Advertiser called the show:

> 'one of those happy occasions when rich and poor mingle freely together, and when young and old drink deep draughts of delight from the common spring'.(1)

The event always took place in the grounds of a large house, was above all an occasion for class mixing. It was admitted that people went for the company rather than the flowers. It was a time when it was possible to imagine that class differences did not exist, although ironically, there were few occasions on which they were more sharply defined. It was noted in 1858 that 'the principal families of the town' attended. Agricultural shows were of less importance. The Banbury Agricultural Association merged with the Oxfordshire society in 1854-55. Occasionally shows took place in Banbury, the most notable occasion being in 1877 when the Oxfordshire Show was combined with the Banbury Flower Show.(2)

Within two months of the opening of the Buckinghamshire Railway in 1850, an excursion train took 130 Banburians to London , and in the

(1) BG, 16 Aug. 1866; BG, 22 Aug. 1857; BA, 27 Aug. 1863.

(2) BG, 3 Sep. 1857; BG, 16 Sep. 1858; BG, 6 Sep.1877; BA, 26 Aug. 1858. NH, 24 June 1854; NH, 18 Nov 1854; NH, 20 Jan. 1855; NH, 14 June, 1856.

first three months of the Great Exhibition in 1851 the railway took over 2,600 excursion passengers to the capital.(1) The railway excursion became one of the staple recreational activities in Banbury. A newspaper commented in 1857:

> 'In the "good old times" and even within a few years, boys and girls were shut up in the little towns and villages in which they were born till they were close upon twenty years of age, but now excursion trips are announced, and we see them preparing for jaunts to London, Portsmouth, Manchester or Warwick, without timidity or unnecessary excitement'.(2)

Excursions offered by the railway companies ran to almost every resort on the south coast from Margate to Weymouth, to Bath, Bristol, Malvern, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool. London excursions enabled members of voluntary bodies to take part in national events like the Oddfellows Fete at the Crystal Palace in 1858, the Foresters' Fete in 1868, or the Rifle Contest at Wimbledon Common in 1861.(3) Often tickets enabled passengers to stay at their destinations for several days, thus introducing the concept of the annual holiday. In 1861 some working men were taking lessons from a French teacher to enable them to converse with working men in Paris.(4) The excursion was a medium like the lecture or the concert and was discussed in the same critical terms. There were complaints in 1855 about the slow and uncomfortable excursion trains on the LNWR, and warnings that the Mechanics' Institute excursion to Malvern in 1865 would be in narrow gauge stock with hard seats.(5)

There was a substantial expansion of sporting activities in Banbury between 1850 and 1880. The Cricket Club, established in 1836 was one

(1) NH, 13 July 1850; NH, 18 Aug.1851; BG, 28 Mar. 1850.
(2)BG, 25 June 1857.
(3) BA, 5 Aug.1858; BA, 13 Aug. 1868; BH, 13 June 1861.
(4) BG, 28 Mar. 1861.
(5) BA, 13 Sep.1855; BG, 22 June 1865.

of the pillars of local respectability. Some matches with teams of unconventional size were still played, but as such regular fixtures as that with Christ Church, Oxford, became established, adherence to accepted rules prevailed. The club generally encouraged cricket in the town, and matches were organised by most of the recreational agencies.(1)

Football became popular in the 1860s. In 1863 a club began to organise games on Saturday afternoons, and it was observed in 1864:

> 'This ancient game appears to be reviving among the young men of this district, and bids to be in the winter what cricket is in the summer. Indeed it is a much more exciting game than cricket, as all the players are more actively engaged, and the fortunes of the field are constantly varying. It is a thoroughly English game, admirably adapted to our winter climate, and well calculated to develop the thews and sinews of our youth. It is moreover remarkably well suited for counteracting the effects of sedentary occupations and throwing off the drousy influences of the desk or the office. Everyone is supposed to know what football is, yet few have seen it played according to rule'.(2)

Like all early football clubs, the Banbury team found it difficult to find rules acceptable to opponents. In March 1864 a match was played against a team of 12 from the University of Oxford. A game between the Treasurer's and the Secretary's teams on Boxing Day 1864 was played with twenty a side. Gradually the club adopted rules similar to those recognised by the English Rugby Union in 1871. The club stimulated the game amongst recreational agencies, and played a match in 1866 against the Rifle Corps.(3) An association football club, the Banbury Rovers, was formed in 1879.(4)

(1) BG, 7 April 1870; BG, 4 June 1857.
(2) BG, 15 Oct. 1863; BA, 17 Mar.1864.
(3) BG,28 Dec. 1864; BG,6 April 1865; BA, 11 Oct.1866; R.C.K.Ensor, England 1870-1914, 1936, pp.164-65.
(4) BG, 16 Oct. 1879.

Swimming was organised on a respectable basis when Thomas Draper built a public baths near the canal in 1855 which attracted 500 bathers a week. In the late 1860s the site was taken over by the Britannia Works, and nude bathing in the canal within the sight of respectable females brought demands for a new pool, which was provided by a private company in the meadows north of the station in 1868.(1) Bowls, quoits, and archery were played in Banbury, but it was observed in 1864 that the town played second fiddle to Brackley for horse racing. Cycling became fashionable in 1869 when races were organised at the Flower Show and the Mechanics' Institute fete, and a Cycling Club was established in 1875. A roller skating rink was opened at the Central Corn Exchange in 1877.(2) Attempts to establish a regular Whit or August Monday Athletics meeting in the 1870s met with only limited success, but the Banbury Harriers Athletics Club was formed in 1879 and opened a gymnasium in 1880.(3)

There was a complaint in 1863 that there was 'not an inch of recreation ground in Banbury'.(4) It was scarcely justified, since the cricket field on the Oxford Road and the Britannia Works recreation ground were in use, and there was space used by the football club on the Hardwick Road, and a cricket ground at the Bowling Green, Nethercote, a suburban public house much used for works outings. Nevertheless the complaint does emphasise the role of sporting organisations, which by bringing

(1) BG, 21 June 1855; BG, 4 Oct. 1855; BG,15 Nov.1855; BG, 26 July 1866; BG, 30 April 1868; W. Potts, op.cit., p.120.
(2) BG, 28 April 1864; BG, 3 Mar.1864; BG, 4 Feb.1875; BA, 5 Aug.1869; BA, 26 Aug. 1869; BA, 1 Feb.1877.
(3) BG, 20 May.1875; 2 Aug.1877; BG,1 Aug.1878; BG, 4 Sep.1879; BA, 28 May 1874; BA, 20 Nov.1879; BA, 24 Dec.1879.
(4) BA, 18 June 1863.

together individuals of limited means were able to secure for them facilities previously only available to landowners. They could also adopt codes of rules which enabled matches to be played with teams from elsewhere. While the specifically sporting clubs in Banbury were almost entirely middle class, the stimulus they gave to the playing of games between other groups, brought sporting activities to a wide range of the population.

The churches' role in recreation steadily increased. Most dissenting congregations built new schoolrooms and their recreational activities expanded to fill them. Sunday schools grew in size, and the scale of their annual treats increased. While town-based societies could organise lively and informed discussions, and promote visits by national figures, denominationally-based bodies could rarely do so. In May 1861 a Wesleyan YMCA was formed, one of its first meetings being a discussion on the immortality of the soul. The group of 'beardless pretenders' soon ceased to meet, because its members lacked the education to discuss theology.(1)

The period between 1850 and 1870 was a plateau in the history of recreation in Banbury. A variety of institutions and activities which had their origins in an earlier period flourished, and then began to show signs of decline. Many of the recreational activities of the period can be interpreted as attempts by the middle class to build bridges between themselves and the respectable artisans. Like the Lincolnshire farmers of the period who organised harvest suppers, the middle classes in Banbury were acutely aware of the rifts that existed between themselves and the artisans.(2) There were increasing

(1) BH,5 July 1861; BH, 12 July 1861; see above pp.283-84.

(2)James Obelkevich,Religion and Rural Society:South Lindsey 1825-1875, 1976, pp.59-60.

indications of working class independence by the 1870s, of which the Co-operative Society was the most significant, and working class energies in the seventies were absorbed in political rather than cultural activities. The strength of community-based organisations like the Mechanics' Institute was being undermined by the growth of denominational agencies, which offered blander, less potentially offensive, and ultimately less attractive activities. The cult of domesticity was a time bomb which ticked beneath the whole framework of recreation in Banbury. The working man's love of his own home was described in deeply sentimental terms by radicals, and by 1870s home ownership was becoming one of the aims of the artisan élite. Thomas Proverbs, a teetotaller and co-operator declared in 1869 that he was 'determined to have a house, a castle of his own'.(1) Such sentiments could be destructive not just of a recreational pattern which involved going to public houses, watching prize fights and gambling, but of one which comprised visits to reading rooms, attendence at public lectures, and participation in Temperence railway excursions. The recreational pattern of the 1850s and 60s was also undermined by the very respectability it fostered. While some drunkenness and disorder persisted, it was agreed in 1900 that there had been a vast improvement in public order during the previous half century. If there was less disreputable behaviour on the streets, there was less incentive for the respectable to display their solidarity by supporting alternative recreations.

The cultural pattern of the mid-nineteenth century was a feature of a particular phase in educational development. Literacy was almost universal among the respectable, but newspapers were expensive, and the lecture, the peep show and the panorama were still effective means

(1) BG, 24 Jan.1850; BA, 18 Nov. 1869.

of disseminating information about current affairs. Newspapers became cheaper after 1855. The local press's coverage of national and international affairs improved, and national newspapers were distributed by train. 'The Morning Star' wrote W.T.Henderson, 'was our sheet anchor'.(1) Doubtless other groups were held at their moorings by different anchors, but each had begun to look to London for its information, and the itinerant lecturer on current affairs gradually became redundant. Mark Rutherford wrote of:

> 'the clubs and parties which, since the days of penny newspapers, now discuss in Cowfold the designs of Russia, the graduation of the Income Tax, or the merits and demerits of the administration. The Cowfold horizon has now been widened....'(2)

The mid-nineteenth century was a 'liberal hour' in the history of many English market towns, a period of self rule, when townspeople devised new organisations, created opportunities to display their own and imported talents, and used the railways to broaden their own horizens. There was sufficient that was distinctive in the pattern of lectures, music, sport and excursions which flourished in Banbury between 1850 and 1870, and began to decline between 1870 and 1880, to describe it as a market town culture. It was a blossoming of a particular way of life which was to wither with the destruction of the economic and political stems which sustained it.

(1) W.T.Henderson, Recollections of His Life.
(2) Mark Rutherford, The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, popular edn., n.d. p. 162.

Chapter Twelve

Going Downhill: Market Town Society in the 1870s.

'While the reaper yonder slashes at the straw, huge ships are on the ocean, rushing through the foam to bring grain to the great cities'. (1) In his poignant description of a declining farmer in the 1870s, Richard Jefferies remarked that the fall of a farmer was so gradual that he might be excused for thinking it would never come, but that blind work was of no avail against the ocean steamer with cargoes of wheat and meat, a general fall of prices and successive low yields consequent upon a run of bad seasons. (2) Banbury declined in a similar manner in the 1870s. Every indicator of the state of the local economy suggests a declining rate of activity, and an undermining of the foundations of the prosperity which the town had enjoyed during the age of high farming. Yet the 1870s were not a period when institutions collapsed, and the facade of local society was remarkably little changed by the onset of the agricultural depression.

The population of the Banbury Union fell after 1870. That of the rural parishes reached a peak of 21,231 in 1841, which declined to 19,440 in 1871, and then by 7.4 per cent in the 1870s and 80s and by 6.9 per cent in the 90s, to reach 15,527 in 1901, a lower figure than a century earlier. Between 1840 and 1870 the decline of the rural parishes had been more than matched by the growth of Banbury itself. The population of the whole union reached a peak of 31,208 in 1871, but declined by 3.5 per cent in the 1870s. While the population of Banbury increased, it did so more slowly than in any previous decade of the century, and at a lower rate than the national average. (3)

(1) Richard Jefferies, Hodge and His Masters, 1966 edn., II, p.127.

(2) Ibid, I, p.36.

(3) See Table Two.

The number of traders remained stable, while the total of carrier journeys to the town actually increased, suggesting that Banbury may have gained some trade from declining smaller market centres. Agriculture was beset by a series of natural disasters, epidemics and low prices. There was a rising tide of emigration and soup kitchens became a regular feature of the winter in Banbury. There was no appreciable expansion of manufacturing industry to compensate for the decline in rural trade. The full effects of the depression hit Banbury in and after 1879. In the early 1880s many farmers failed, and in 1881 alone two solicitors' partnerships, two substantial innkeepers and a prominent linen draper all went bankrupt.(1) The depression was reflected in the town's cultural life. In 1882 the Mechanics' Institute lost 71 members, of whom 59 had gone to seek employment elsewhere.(2)

The political debate in the town was dominated by four increasingly influential radical groups. The Co-operative Society, after establishing its own premises in 1868, steadily expanded its trading, but rose to national prominence on account of its educational activities, publishing the Co-operative Record the first widely circulated journal in the movement, which from 1871 until 1875 provided an eloquent commentary from below upon Banbury society.(3) The National Agricultural Labourers Union grew from the meeting addressed by Joseph Arch on 7 February 1872 at Wellesbourne, only 14 miles from Banbury.(4)

(1) Rusher's Banbury Lists and Directories; Audrey Taylor, Gilletts: Bankers at Banbury and Oxford, 1964, pp. 163-83.
(2) A.Taylor, op.cit., p.169.
(3) W.H.Lickorish, Our Jubilee Story, 1916, pp.6-7; Frederick Lamb, A Brief History of the Banbury Co-operative Industrial Society, 1887, passim.
(4) Joseph Arch, The Autobiography of Joseph Arch, 1966 edn., pp.42-45; Pamela Horn, Joseph Arch, 1971, pp.44-47, 54, 63-67, 141.

Many important incidents in the Union's history took place in Banbury. In April 1873 the men of Wigginton marched through the streets singing union songs as they sought advice on emigration.[1] Banbury was also one of the chief centres of resistance to compulsory vaccination after 1874. Several local men were imprisoned for refusing to have their children vaccinated, a clinic was opened in 1879 adjacent to the Vaccination Station, where vaccine was washed from the arms of children who had been neglected and a slate of anti-vaccination candidates, both Liberal and Conservative, was successful in the 1879 municipal election.[2] The Temperance Movement grew steadily more powerful, but at the same time it became more desperate. It widened its denominational base until it incorporated most Wesleyans and some Anglicans, but its activists became increasingly abusive towards the drink trade, speaking of publicans with the kind of language that anti-vaccinators used about doctors, and accusing magistrates of forcing the liquor traffic on communities which did not want it.[3] Temperance meetings were increasingly occasions of disorder, and in 1873 the local magistrates tried to ban open air meetings after uproar at a temperance rally in the Cowfair.[4] Meetings on the rights of women were also the occasions of violence led by similar groups to those who opposed teetotallism,[5] and there was also disorder when the Northampton radical Charles Bradlaugh lectured on Christianity

(1) J.R.Hodgkins, Over the Hills to Glory, 1978, pp.68-69; BG, 3 April 1873.
(2) BPL, RC pp.281, 340; BG, 17 April 1879; BG, 20 Nov. 1879.
(3) BA, 11 Jan. 1871; BA, 21 Dec. 1871; BG, 21 Aug. 1873.
(4) BG, 26 June 1873; BA, 26 June 1873.
(5) BG, 26 Oct. 1871; BG, 14 Mar. 1872; BG, 25 Mar. 1875; BA, 26 Oct. 1871; BA, 25 April 1872.

in 1879, as a result of which he was banned from using the town hall.[1]

There were many similarities and intricate connections between the four radical movements. Men like John Butcher, a shoemaker, Thomas Proverbs, a clerk, and William Johnson, a currier, were involved in most if not all of them. All four movements assumed an air of moral superiority over the upper classes. All propagated a philosophy of the simple life, of gaining satisfaction by the suppression of aspirations. 'Dress yourself in garments plain and good of your own manufacture' urged the Banbury Co-operative Record in 1873, 'and let those who know no better have all the fal-lals and feathers'.[2] All of the movements had an element of middle class leadership, and even the working class radical leaders saw their task in almost paternalistic terms, and were obviously conscious that their view of society isolated them from many of those they were trying to lead.[3] The radical causes were increasingly intermixed as they developed similar, almost paranoiac views of magistrates, doctors, publicans and the government at large.

Throughout the 1870s the Liberal ascendancy in Banbury was threatened by what Walter Bagehot defined as 'constituency government':

> 'the precise opposite of Parliamentary government. It is the government of immoderate persons far from the scene of action, instead of the government of moderate persons close to the scene of action; it is the judgement of persons judging in the last resort and without a penalty in lieu of persons judging in fear of a dissolution'.(4)

The radicals in Banbury seemed at times to be as concerned to demonstrate their destructive power by dividing the Liberal Party and aiding

(1) BG, 28 Aug. 1870: BG, 24 Jan. 1880; BA,25 Sep. 1879; BA, 6 Nov. 1879; BA, 24Jan 1880.

(2)BCR, April 1873.

(3)BCR, Oct 1871.

(4) Walter Bagehot, The English Constitution, 1963 edn., p.161.

the Conservatives, as to see the realisation of their particular objectives.

The election of 1874 in Banbury was particularly frenzied, since Bernhard Samuelson was on his yacht in the Mediterranean when Gladstone hurriedly announced the dissolution of Parliament on 24 January. He returned to Banbury on Thursday 29 January, a few hours after a Conservative, Josiah Wilkinson arrived in the town. Polling took place on Monday 2 February. It was acknowledged that the Education question lost Samuelson some support, and violence, apparently caused by foundrymen, at one of Wilkinson's meetings, brought him into disfavour among some voters. He won the election by 760 votes to 676, thus gaining only 52.93 per cent of the poll, a low margin by the standards of the constituency.(1) Soon after the election a Working Mens' Liberal Association was formed, but its meetings often served only to ventilate the questions on which Liberals were divided, like vaccination and Sunday observance. Samuelson confronted his critics with considerable courage, and was always ready to propound capitalism among co-operators, to argue that compulsory vaccination was necessary to eradicate smallpox, or that legistration could not create public sobriety.(2)

The Conservative government's foreign policy finally overcame the fissiparous tendencies among the Banbury Liberals, but until the eve of polling in 1880 the party was threatened by the withdrawl of the support of radical groups. Expressions of disgust at the Turkish suppression of the rising in Bulgaria appeared in Banbury newspapers in June 1876, and public feelings intensified during the Autumn and throughout 1877 and 1878 when the Eastern Question was the subject of

(1) BLP, Case W, ff.1-7; BA, 5 Feb. 1874; BG, 5 Feb. 1874.
(2) BA, 26 Feb.1874; BG, 12Feb.1874; BG, 26 Feb.1874; BG, 22 Oct.1874.

sermons, YMCA discussions and Mechanics' Institute lectures.[1] As the election of 1880 approached other issues arose. When Samuelson spoke about the Eastern Question in October 1878 there were shouts of 'We want plenty of trade and not so many parsons'. The temperance society began to lobby him about prohibition, and to link the drink question with the depression. There was a proposal in 1878 that W.Gibson Watt might stand for Banbury as the candidate of the anti-vaccinators, opposing the publicans on the drink question, supporting Gladstone's foreign policy and seeking land reform. In February 1879 120 people, many of them Liberals, affirmed that they would not vote for any parliamentary candidate who was not pledged to end compulsory vaccination.[2]

In February 1880 the Conservatives adopted as their candidate Thomas Gibson Bowles, founder of the journal Vanity Fair, who promised to oppose compulsory vaccination. He was an unashamed imperialist, proclaiming 'I am a Jingo and proud of it', and openly appealed to anti-Semitic and anti-German feelings. He made no concessions to the temperance movement, accusing Gladstone of attacking the rights of publicans and conspicuously drinking jugs of beer at open air meetings.[3] Samuelson announced that he would seek an end to compulsion for those who conscientiously objected to vaccination, and gradually the single-issue opposition dissolved. On March 19 a succession of anti-vaccinators declared that they would sink their cause to return the Liberal. Two issues overrode Banbury's many crotchets. One was foreign policy, a matter of morality,

(1)BG,30 Nov.1876; BG,1Feb.1877; BG,7 June 1877; BG,24 Jan.1878; BA,29 Sep. 1877.

(2) BG, 25 July 1878; BG,10 Oct.1878; BG,27Feb. 1879; BG, 16Oct.1879; BA, 5 Dec.1878; BA, 6 Nov.1879; BPL, RC p.281.

(3) L.E.Taylor, The Irrepressible Victorian, 1965, pp.62-66;BA, 19 Feb. 1880; BG, 11 Mar.1880; BG,18 Mar.1880; BG, 25 Mar. 1880.

on which any dissenter found it difficult to oppose Gladstone. The other was the economy. Speaker after speaker at Liberal meetings called for the return of Gladstone 'the greatest financier in this or any other country.'[1] Samuelson was elected with 1,018 votes against 583 for Bowles, a 63.59 per cent share of the poll. The Banbury Advertiser noted:

> 'a singular unanimity existed among the Liberal Party. The teetotallers and Nonconformists supported him (Samuelson) almost to a man, and many of the anti-vaccinators who had pledged themselves not to vote for him.... gave him their support'.(2)

The national issues of foreign policy and the economy, often encapsulated in the personality of William Ewart Gladstone, overshadowed every local schism. The radicals were for the most part men whose beliefs were as much derived from Dissent as those of the leaders of the local Liberal Party. When issues were posed in clear-cut moral terms, it was difficult for them merely to demonstrate their destructive power andreturn the Conservative. Moreover radicalism was a way of life. While Bowles appealed to anti-vaccinators, the same individuals were often teetotallers who could scarcely applaud his public beer-swigging. The Bulgarian atrocities and the agricultural depression brought an end to 'the age of the crotchet', but politics as well as the local economy was on the verge of transformation. Parliamentary Reform was an essential part of the radical programme, and it implied the redistribution of seats. When it was realised, it brought to an end the parliamentary borough of Banbury and the political division between town and countryside which had existed since the reign of Mary I. The game of politics was played thereafter to very different rules from those which had obtained between 1832 and 1880.

(1) BA, 25 Mar. 1880;BA, 1 April 1880; BG,18 Mar.1880; BG, 1 April 1880.
(2) Table Eleven; BA, 1 April 1880.

Chapter Thirteen

Reconsiderations

'An agricultural district, like a little kingdom, has its own capital city'.(1)

The period between 1830 and 1880 marked a distinct phase in the history of Banbury. In economic terms it had begun slightly earlier in the nineteenth century, with a quickening in the growth of population, and ended about 1870 as the rate of growth slackened. Between 1831 and 1871 the population of the town rose by 83.10 per cent. Between 1871 and 1931 it increased by only 18.56 per cent. In political and social terms the beginning of the period was marked by the town's securing the control of its own affairs through the Reform Act, the Municipal Corporations Act, and the founding of publicly accountable voluntary societies. That control was gradually relinquished after 1880. Banbury lost its separate parliamentary representation in the Third Reform Act, and its powers over its own affairs have dwindled in the present century until at the lowest level of government, it is now administered by a district council which governs all north Oxfordshire. The mid-nineteenth century was marked by a passion for innovation which had certainly ended by the 1880s. The cultural societies founded in the 1830s brought the town together as a community, attracted the best talents to Banbury and encouraged local performers. This vitality had ended by 1880, undermined by denominationally based activities, and by such general cultural changes as the spread of musical activities in the middle class households and the growth of national newspapers. The predominant memories of cultural activities in Banbury about 1900 are of informally organised performances by local people.(2)

(1) Richard Jefferies, Hodge and His Masters, 1966 edn., I, 119.
(2) J.L.Langley,'memories of Late Victorian Banbury', C & CH, II, 4, 1963, pp.51-56; - 'Banbury at the Turn of the Century', C & CH, V, 2, 1972, pp. 23-40.

In her classic social survey of Banbury in the late 1940s Margaret Stacey delineated a 'traditional'town community, whose ways of life and assumptions were abruptly challenged by the building in 1931-33 of an aluminium factory which brought to the town professional managers, migrant workers from Lancashire, South Wales and Nottinghamshire, and effective trades unions.(1) The early 1930s mark the end of another distinct phase in the history of Banbury as clearly as the years around 1880 mark its beginning. Since the early thirties Banbury has increasingly been part of the light industry-dominated, semi-urban south east, with a few large concerns which belong to multi-national groups, and a great variety of small-scale manufacturing and service industries.

As history, Margaret Stacey's analysis of a 'traditional' community requires some qualification. Memoirs of the 1890s and the Edwardian period confirm most of her conclusions, yet examination of society in Banbury in the mid-nineteenth century reveals a very different kind of community. The 'traditional' society which was undermined in the 1930s was that which had grown up in the years of Banbury's stagnation, not one which had existed since time immemorial. The traditional division of society in Banbury into two sets, one Free Church, Liberal and tee-total, and the other Anglican, Conservative and partial to drinking,(2) obviously had its origins in the social and political polarisation of the mid-nineteeth century, but alcohol was only emerging as a critical dividing factor in the 1870s as teetotallism became almost a condition of dissenting chapel membership. Professor Stacey concluded that before the 1930s Banbury was a place with a rigid social hierarchy, 'where you knew where you were'.(3) It is only with considerable qualification that this description could be applied to Banbury in the mid-nineteenth century.

(1) Margaret Stacey, Tradition and Change: a study of Banbury, 1960
(2) Ibid, p.12.
(3) Ibid, p.11.

There was a broad division between respectable and non-respectable, but above that line the boundaries of social intercourse seem to have been less rigid than they were about 1900. In the 1940s the traditional businessman was 'concerned less with making as much money as possible... than with living comfortably and maintaining his social status and position'. He was '...not always on the lookout for new and better ways of working'.(1) This was emphatically not true between 1830 and about 1860, when Banbury abounded in zeal for innovation. Another characteristic of 'traditional' society was the avoidance of serious discussion of political and religious issues,(2) something where the contrast with the mid-nineteenth century is very marked. Banbury was then an unusually open society, capable of debating issues in its newspapers or with pamphlets and handbills produced by its four or five printers, or at public meetings, called, according to custom by the mayor, after petitions from citizens on matters of public concern. Thus in the mid-nineteenth century Banbury was very different from the stagnant, conformist community of 1880-1930, and from the 'sleepy hollow' stereotype of the Victorian small market town. It remains to examine the ways in which its history illuminates Victorian society at large.

Nineteenth century England was divided into several hundred centripetal economic networks centred on market towns, their limits being defined by the extent of country carriers' journeys. Variations in terrain and in the spacing of towns ensured that such hinterlands were uneven both in size and shape. Each market town, like Hardy's Casterbridge, was 'the pole, focus or nerve knot of the surrounding country life'.(3) Each network had its own frontiers:

(1) Ibid, p.31.

(2) Ibid, pp.54-58.

(3) Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, 1978edn., p.64.

> 'The fields roll on and rise into the hills, the hills sink again into a plain, just the same as elsewhere; there are cornfields and meadows; villages and farmsteads, and no visible boundary. Nor is it recognised upon the map. It does not fit into any political or legal limit; it is neither a county, half a county, a hundred or police division. But to the farmer it is a distinct land. If he comes from a distance he will at once notice little pecularities in the fields, the crops, the stock or customs. ...The district, with its capital city... really is distinct, well-marked and defined. The very soil and substrata are characteristic. The products are wheat, and cattle, and sheep, the same as elsewhere, but the proportions of each, the kind of sheep, the traditionary methods and farm customs are separate and marked. The rotation of crops is different, the agreements are on a different basis, the very gates to the fields, perhaps, are not used in other places'.(1)

Some of the towns at the centres of such networks were places with many functions like Nottingham, Cheltenham or Oxford. Others had a volume of trade out of all proportion to their resident population. Cirencester, with a population of just over 6,000,had 160 carrier journeys per week, more than Wolverhampton, Shrewsbury or Stafford. Jefferies wrote of it:

> 'The place is a little market town, the total of whose population in the census sounds absurdly small; yet it is a complete world in itself; a capital city, with its kingdom'.(2)

Newark with 120 carrier journeys a week, Newbury, with 106, Daventry with 96, and Chesterfield, with 90, were all places which seem to have been primarily market towns with as much or more market trade as some county towns.(3) In this group Banbury stands predominant, its trade being comparable with that of all but the largest market centres in the Midlands. It had many natural advantages, standing at a focal point of transport routes, with no rival town within carrying distance, and the whole area within a 15 mile radius consisting of highly productive farmland, but the character of a town was shaped by the

(1) R. Jefferies, op.cit., I, p.119.

(2) Ibid, I, p.120.

(3) See Table One.

philosophy of its citizens and by its history, not merely by its location. Joseph Ashby's remarks on the varying characteristics of neighbouring villages applied equally to market towns.[1] Cirencester, like Banbury, was a place whose trade was much larger than might be expected from the size of its population, but, unlike Banbury, it was wholly under the influence of a great estate. Its landscape was dominated by the 'immensely high and endless wall' of the Duke of Beaufort's park, and the chief topic of conversation in the inns was 'What will he do?' and 'What will he say to it?'.[2] Shrewsbury, which between the 1780s and 1830s enjoyed a period of remarkable prosperity and achievement under the leadership of an élite which included Thomas Telford, Samuel Butler, Charles Bage and William Hazledine, relapsed in the mid-nineteenth century into a town celebrated only for its conformity.[3] Swindon, in the 1830s a 'sleepy hollow' type of town, with faint pretensions to being a place of resort, grew after the establishment of the Great Western locomotive works in the 1840s, into a market centre which dominated north Wiltshire and drew trade from smaller centres.[4]

Some parliamentary boroughs had long traditions of political radicalism. In Coventry this dated from long before the Reform Act, and arose from the wide franchise under which a large body of artisans, the freemen of the city, were able to vote.[5] The shift of political power in Banbury was sudden and dramatic. Throughout the eighteenth

(1) M.K. Ashby, Joseph Ashby of Tysoe, 1961, pp.56, 150-51.
(2) R. Jefferies, op.cit., pp.120-26
(3) Alistair Penfold, ed., Thomas Telford; Engineer, 1980, 17-18, 59.
(4) Richard Jefferies, The Hills and the Vale, 1980 edn., pp. 104-33; VCH Wilts., IV, pp.207-12; IX, 104-10.
(5) John Prest, The Industrial Revolution in Coventry, 1960, pp.28-31.

century the town had rendered fealty to aristocrats with few traces of dissent, but in the 1830s the townspeople quite deliberately and consciously took the opportunities provided by national political developments to seize power for themselves. This development had several roots. One of the most important seems to have been a passion for honest, efficient government, which arose from Evangelicalism both dissenting and Anglican, and which inspired men like William Spurrett, Thomas Tims and T.R.Cobb to sweep from power those who for decades had paid homage to Wroxton. Tribute was paid to William Spurrett on his death in 1833 as 'One of the most early, active and constant of our townsmen in contributing to the overthrow of political corruption in Banbury'.(1) The growth of a Reform party was aided by the roles which men of Liberal views were able to play in the 1820s in the Church Trustees and the Paving and Lighting Commission, which gave them experience of public administration without being corrupted by the hospitality of Wroxton. The morale of Reformers in Banbury was strengthened by the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, always seen in the town as the beginning of an age of enlightenment, and by Roman Catholic Emancipation, which in Banbury as in George Eliot's Treby Magna, was the first of a series of issues which polarised public opinion.(2) There was also a sense in Banbury that the town was recovering its Puritan past, that the subservience to Wroxton in the eighteenth century had been an aberration. It was remarked in 1833 that:

> 'the same zealous, independent way of thinking her ancients followed in religion, her native and adopted children, without abandoning religion, pursue in politics'.(3)

(1) OH, 7 Dec. 1833.

(2) George Eliot, Felix Holt the Radical, Blackwood edn., n.d.pp.29,42,214.

(3) OH, 11 Jan. 1833.

Liberalism became Banbury's dominant political creed and Conservatives were excluded from office, the challenge to established authority coming from radicals. This political era came to an end in the early 1880s. In 1882 the Liberals celebrated the Jubilee of Reform. At a dinner at which the Reform Banner of 1832 was hung in triumph, old men recalled the exciting times of the 1830s and congratulated themselves on the improvements and increased wealth which had followed their success. Significantly the principal speakers were all non-townsmen. The Liberal Party lacked dynamic leadership, and was increasingly identified with teetotallism. Six months before the Jubilee the Conservative Club opened, ironically, in James Wake Golby's old house in High Street. Its formation marked the beginning of Conservative prosperity in Banbury. The Liberals won every election in the borough between the First and Third Reform Bills, but only five of the thirteen contests in the Banbury division of Oxfordshire between 1885 and 1931.(1)

Banbury's wide range of shops and small-scale manufactures marked the town as a market centre of consequence. A characteristic of the 'sleepy hollow' type of town was that most shops tended to 'general' trade, with drapers selling footwear and grocers offering stationery and animal medicines, as in Rutherford's Cowfold, or in Rugby, where the three ironmongers in 1835 were all grocers.(2) This was emphatically not the case in Banbury, but the town lacked the law stationers, equity draughtsmen and architects to be found in county towns, the professors of dancing and sharebrokers who flourished in places of resort like

(1) BA, 1 Dec.1881; BA, 9 Mar.1882; BA, 29 June 1882; BG, 29 June 1882; W. Potts, Banbury through One Hundred Years, 1942, pp.125-26.
(2)Mark Rutherford, The Revolution in Tanner's Lane, 1887 edn., p.233.

Ludlow and Leamington, or the booksellers, cricket bat dealers and billiard table proprietors who prospered in Oxford. Most market towns had some manufactures of more than local consequence. One reason why Banbury failed to grow after 1870 was that plush, its traditional manufacture, failed to expand like shoemaking in Northampton, hosiery in Leicester or biscuits in Reading.

The rise of ironfounding in Banbury was an experience the town shared with almost every market town of consequence in Western Europe. A recent study of Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Essex shows that there are remains of iron foundries in 38 towns, most of which began by making agricultural implements.(1) The crowded condition of Basingstoke in 1865 was said to be due to the foundries.(2) There were foundries called the Britannia Ironworks in Birmingham, Derby and Nottingham as well as in Banbury. The foundries of Banbury's neighbours, Warwick and Leamington, specialised in the manufacture of ovens, or kitcheners. In 1859 'Leamington' ranges and kitcheners were being advertised by ironmongers in Colchester.(3) Even a town as small as Wantage was famous in 1854 for the Vale of the White Horse Ironworks, manufacturers of steam threshing machines.(4) In 1854 when a Daventry ironfounder sold up, his stock included a 6 h.p. steam engine, and patterns for grates, door scrapers, pig troughs and stoves.(5)

(1) David Alderton and John Booker, The Batsford Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of East Anglia, 1980, pp.185-85, et passim

(2) 7th Report of the Medial Officer of the Privy Council, Appendix Six, BPP, 1865, XXVI, p.201.

(3) F.White, Directory and Topography of Birmingham &c., 1856, pp.106, 342; Essex Chronicle, 15 Oct.1859.

(4) Martin Billings, Directory and Gazetteer of the Counties of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, 1854, pp. 65-72.

(5) NH, 12 Aug. 1854.

A foundry became almost a sine qua non of a market town, a facility to be sought by aspiring communities. In 1855 a meeting of influential citizens of Buckingham decided to form the Buckingham Castle Ironworks, after a resolution that a foundry 'was required' in the town.(1) Banbury's engineering industry did not grow significantly after 1870, nor did it expand its range of products. There were by the 1880s very large works making agricultural implements in Bedford, Lincoln and Gainsborough, and in East Anglia foundries which had originally made farm machinery by 1900 were manufacturing such diverse products as tortoise stoves, traction engines and mining equipment.(2) Banbury's engineering industry may have stagnated as a result of the agricultural depression, or because the Britannia Works was a relatively insignificant part of a vast ironmaking concern. Another reason was the lack of an institute of technical education in Banbury to sustain the industry with professional engineers, designers and technicians. It is curious that no such institute was established in the constituency of the leading parliamentary advocate of technical education, yet this failure is not so much a personal indictment of Bernhard Samuelson as of the unimaginative nature of educational policy. An outlook of deep pessimism may have been appropriate to those who sought to impose literacy on rural England, but as the experiences of the British School in Banbury show, there were men of vision and ability in the towns, who, given a more encouraging legislative framework, could have provided an educational system more attuned to economic expansion, and less inclined to reinforce a rigid class system.

(1) NH, 20 Oct. 1855

(2) S.B.Saul, 'The Market and the Development of the Mechanical Engineering Industries in Britain, 1860-1914', Economic History Review, 2nd Series, XX, 1, 1967, pp.118-19; D.Alderton and J.Booker, op.cit., passim

Educational changes may also account in part for a more general slowing down of economic activity in Banbury and for the decline of local culture. It seems that in the early nineteenth century most of the leading men of the town were educated at small private establishments in other towns, rather like that attended by Thomas Tulliver. There was no post-elementary school in Banbury before the 1890s, and it seems that the sons of leading traders and professional men increasingly went to public schools where their eyes were lifted above the horizons of their home town, which had been the centre of their fathers' world, to the professions and the colonies. Not until the 1930s was this draining away of talent matched by an inflow of educated 'spiralists' employed by multi-national companies, and later by central and local government. This is a matter on which it is impossible to present firm, quantitive evidence, but the contrast between the able and confident political, economic and social leadership of Banbury in the 1830s and 40s and that provided by those who ruled the town between 1880 and 1930 is obvious enough. The long-established family firm was the exception not the rule in Banbury, and the town might have shown more vitality if more educated sons of burgesses had returned to take over their fathers' concerns.

In Banbury a sense of urgency dictated by a rapidly rising population brought an end to the *accidie* of centuries in relation to public health. The streets were paved, houses were drained and pure water brought within reach of every citizen. Because this happened in most English towns it should not be considered something which was pre-ordained and determined. It was part of that Evangelically-inspired passion for order and good government which swept the ancient régime from power in the 1830s. The removal of the bow windows, door steps,

scrapers and cellar hatches, which obstructed the streets of Banbury as they did those of Casterbridge, was as symbolic as the corporation's refusal in 1838 to appoint a High Steward.(1)

Religious polarisation was a common feature of English towns in the nineteenth century, although in places dominated by great estates, like Cirencester or Knutsford. Dissent was much weaker than in towns which had a greater degree of independence. Religious beliefs were held in Banbury with an unusually passionate intensity. In 1865, some 20 years after it had ceased to be a matter of public debate, Bernhard Samuelson's canvassers found a voter 'mad upon the Maynooth Grant'. Such intense feelings were retained by Banburians who emigrated. In 1879 a Times correspondent found himself travelling in the post cart from Maritzburg to Ladysmith, whose driver was a Banburian who had once driven stage coaches to Oxford, and true to Banbury's traditions, he expressed a particularly fierce dislike of Bishop Colenso.(2)

Society in mid-nineteenth century Banbury was no more divisible than that of fifteenth century Florence or sixteenth century Antwerp. In Victorian England as in any other country or period social vitality was reflected as much in cultural achievements as in economic expansion or political wisdom. Banbury's rulers were not atypical of those who held authority in many towns, and they included some men of singularly narrow vision. Nevertheless they cannot be patronisingly dismissed as 'self-reliant and sensible men, good citizens in many respects, but Philistines'.(3) The cultural achievements of men like Edward Cobb,

(1) Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge, 1978 edn. p.62.
(2) ORO, 315 Box 80, Bundle M, Samuelson election papers; BG, 19 April 1879.
(3) G.M.Trevelyan, English Social History, 1944, p.493.

Bernhard Samuelson, William Potts, William Bigg, William Wilson and the founders of the Co-operative Society were not negligible. They brought to their fellow citizens music of a high quality, a remarkable degree of knowledge of foreign countries and of the natural sciences, and an acquaintance with a wide range of literature, through lectures, readings and libraries. This was a culture which has left few recognisable remains. It compares ill with that of the court of Louis XIV or of Rembrandt's Amsterdam, but not with that of most twentieth century English towns. It is possible to sense the vitality of the period in some recorded speeches, like Edward Cobb's contribution to the debate on the Sabbath in 1849, and in some satirical election squibs. A society in which a reflection on the polling of Superintendent Thompson in 1859 could be a subtle parody of one of Hamlet's soliloquies, or an account of the town's politics between 1858 and 1866 could be written in 72 verses which sensitively reflect therhythms of the Authorised Version of the Old Testament, was not wholly Philistine.(1) How closely economic and cultural factors interacted in a market town was shown in Banbury's small neighbour, Brackley, when in 1856, after the establishment of a corn exchange and a regular monthly market, a dinner was held to mark the revival of a wool fair. The town's regeneration was much remarked upon, and was said to have originated with the formation of a Literary and Philosophical Society.(2) Debates, lectures and concerts were not the outcome of successful trading and manufacturing, they were part of the same vital society, the other side of the same coin.

(1) BLP, PC VIII, p.243, Ibid, XI, p.10.
(2) NH, 12 July 1856.

Nineteenth century Banbury was shaped above all by its own history, by its sense of identity as a town. Its citizens felt themselves superior to countrymen, both to the fawning deferentials of closed villages like Aynho and Thenford, to the squalid paupers who crowded into Moreton Pinkney or Middleton Cheney, and to dissolute aristocrats. This was a superiority reinforced by a vivid sense of the past. A Banburian wrote in 1833:

> 'Two centuries ago she was famed for her "cakes, ale and zeal", and in not one of the three articles has she degenerated. Few men can inhabit her a week but must imbibe a portion of her zeal'. (1)

Like George Eliot's St. Oggs, Banbury is 'a town which carries the traces of its long growth and history like a millenial tree'.(2) The dendrochronologist examining its annular rings will find that those reflecting the greatest period of past prosperity were not left by Elizabethan drapers, as in Shrewsbury, or eighteenth century resort developers, as in Bath, but were created by the bankers, attorneys, linen drapers and ironmongers of the mid-nineteenth century. The main streets are still lined by the classical shop fronts of the 1850s and 60s, with their Bath stone dressings. Public meetings still take place in Henry Tancred's town hall. Dissenters still worship in Joseph Parker's Doric oratory, while the facade of the Cornhill Corn Exchange forms the entrance to a shopping precinct of the 1970s.

Real power in Victorian England remained in the hands of the landed classes. Banbury was unusual, as a town dependent on agriculture, in that for half a century it was as free from aristocratic control as Manchester or Birmingham. The innovative prowess of its

(1) OH, 11 Jan. 1833.

(2) George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, Nelson edn., n.d., p.129.

tradesmen, the passions of its politicians, the zeal of its believers, the rationality of its sanitary reformers, the talents of its musicians and lecturers, were provided with an environment in which they could flourish. Many aspects of life in Banbury, the number of carriers' carts, the number of patents taken out by its tradesmen, the intensity of its religious controversies, the richness of its culture, have a sense of exaggeration about them. In one sense Banbury was a very exceptional place. There were few market towns of its size with similar attributes. But Manchester too was an exceptional place, so was Camberwell, so was Juniper Hill. By studying the athlete the physiologist understands the workings of every human body. By examining Banbury, a good anatomical specimen of the mature market town, we gain some understanding of the whole species, and of Victorian England at large.

Table One

A comparison of some Midlands market towns.

Source: Sundry trade directories.

The purpose of this table is to give an indication of the place of Banbury in the scaleof Midlands market towns, by comparing the numbers of journeys made each week by carriers to a selection of towns, and the numbers of tradesmen in occupations particularly linked with market functions. The table is arranged in order of the totals of carrier journeys per week. Due allowance should be made for the varying dates of the directories, and for the different conventions used by directory publishers.

Town	Date	Carrier journeys per week	Population in 1851	Linen Drapers	Grocers	Iron Mongers	Public Houses
Birmingham	1856	524	232,841	87	170	64	1597
Reading	1854	513	21,456	24	74	16	212
Derby	1846	465	40,609	25	42	5	232
Leicester	1835	454	60,584	25	82	9	369
Banbury	1851	446	8,793	16	19	16	80
Bury St.Edmunds	1844	340	13,900	14	21	21	75
Northampton	1849	290	26,657	17	39	11	162
Oxford	1854	290	27,843	15	52	11	233
Coventry	1856	287	36,812	20	43	10	239
Ipswich	1844	250	32,914	18	43	10	168
Nottingham	1835	235	57,407	37	82	11	390
Wolverhampton	1851	142	49,985	23	80	18	320
Newark	1835	123	11,330	13	22	6	78
Shrewsbury	1851	116	19,681	18	38	11	155
Newbury	1854	106	6,574	15	27	9	80
Daventry	1849	96	4,430	6	14	4	41
Warwick	1856	92	10,973	10	16	4	71
Chesterfield	1846	90	7,101	12	17	5	49
Abingdon	1854	71	5,954	5	18	4	71
Hereford	1851	69	12,108	15	36	7	87
Cheltenham	1859	63	35,051	32	56	19	202
Sleaford	1842	54	3,729	7	12	4	26
Leamington	1856	52	15,962	15	28	6	82
Wantage	1854	52	2,951	6	9	4	28
Melton Mowbray	1835	48	4,391	7	16	2	46
Stratford on Avon	1835	40	3,372	7	8	2	37
Worksop	1854	33	6,058	6	12	2	43
Huntingdon	1854	31	6,219	9	8	4	31
Witney	1854	30	3,099	7	17	4	43
Ashbourne	1846	26	2,418	11	13	4	35
Stafford	1851	25	11,829	12	32	6	84
Lichfield	1851	24	7,012	9	18	6	65
Barton on Humber	1842	18	3,866	-	12	2	16
Rugby	1835	20	6,317	4	8	3	41
Leek	1851	20	8,877	8	12	3	47
Bridgnorth	1851	16	7,610	4	16	3	73
Bicester	1854	16	3,054	5	8	4	22
Chipping Norton	1854	15	2,932	3	6	3	26
Leominster	1859	13	5,214	7	13	4	61
Brackley	1849	12	2,157	3	9	2	17
Bishop's Castle	1851	9	1,961	2	5	3	11
Deddington	1854	9	2,178	3	9	2	9
Chipping Campden	1859	5	2,351	4	4	4	15

It should be noted that in the smallest places some at least of the carrier journeys were outward journeys to neighbouring market towns, not inward journeys from villages

Table Two

The Population of Banbury and the Banbury Union in the Nineteenth Century.

Sources: Census Returns.

	Banbury borough	Neithrop	Grimsbury	Total population of Banbury parish	Population of other parishes in Banbury PL Union	Total population of Union	Percentage of Union population in Banbury
1801	2755	1055	260	4070	15737	19807	20.5
1811	2869	1332	248	4449	16434	20883	21.3
1821	3396	1851	426	5673	19362	25035	22.7
1831	3737	2169	521	6427	20278	26705	24.1
1841	3736	2850	655	7241	21231	28472	25.5
1851	4035	4185	573	8793	20995	29788	29.5
1861	4055	5072	1111	10238	19923	30161	33.9
1871	4114	5749	1905	11768	19440	31208	37.1
1881	3600	6060	2467	12127	17994	30121	40.3
1891	3638	6153	3031	12822	16673	29495	43.5
1901	3394	6617	3015	13026	15527	28553	45.6

Table Three

Banbury: Occupational Structure in 1851.

Source: 1851 Census Enumerators' Returns.

	Total	Proportion of working population	Total	Proportion of working population	Total	Proportion of working population
1. Leisured class					113	2.74
2. Professional					183	4.44
3. Civil & Borough Service					46	1.11
4. Agricultural traders					66	1.60
5. Transport, accommodation and food					434	10.52
5.1. Transport			184	4.46		
5.2. Drink Trade			231	5.60		
5.3. Other accommodation & food			19	0.46		
6. Retail trade					442	10.71
6.1. Food			244	5.91		
6.2. Textiles			75	1.82		
6.3. Miscellaneous			123	2.98		
7. Crafts and Manufactures					1384	33.55
7.1. Small Scale Crafts &c			870	21.09		
7.1.1. Metal	95	2.30				
7.1.2. Leather	200	4.85				
7.1.3. Clothing	394	9.55				
7.1.4. Wood	96	2.33				
7.1.5. Fine Crafts	56	1.36				
7.1.6. Miscellaneous	29	0.70				
7.2. Building Trade			229	5.55		
7.2.1. Construction	184	4.45				
7.2.2. Manfr. & Sales	45	1.09				
7.3. Larger Scale Manufactures			285	6.91		
7.3.1. Textiles	195	4.73				
7.3.2. Engineering	90	2.18				
8. Agriculture and Horticulture					306	7.42
9. Domestic Service					735	17.81
10. Miscellaneous					417	10.10
10.1. Hawkers scavengers &c			50	1.21		
10.2. Unclassified Occupations			355	8.60		
10.3. Non-local occupation			12	0.29		
Totals					4126	100

Table Four

Migration into Banbury from the hinterland 1851 and 1871

Source: 1851 and 1871 Census Enumerators' Returns.

The index figure is obtained by dividing the population of the parish concerned in 1851 or 1871 by the number of migrants from the parish recorded in Banbury in the same year.

Parish & distance from Banbury (in miles)	1851 Migrants in Banbury	1851 Index Figure	1871 Migrants in Banbury	1871 Index Figure
Drayton.2.	23	10.22	51	30.18
Bodicote.2.	104	15.45	142	20.97
Broughton.3.	15	8.33	27	17.76
North Newington.3.	45	10.32	39	8.88
Wroxton.3.	49	6.21	48	6.52
Hanwell.3.	31	10.30	64	25.10
Adderbury.4.	110	8.16	109	8.52
Bloxham.4.	120	8.99	113	7.65
Tadmarton.4.	27	6.00	43	9.91
Milton.4.	12	7.32	13	8.84
Horley.4.	26	6.62	44	13.02
Shotteswell.4.	20	6.09	25	8.12
Cropredy.4.	47	7.89	39	7.29
Chacombe.4.	23	10.87	59	13.08
Middleton Cheney.4.	120	8.37	121	9.79
Kings Sutton.4.	36	2.70	70	5.31
Barfords.5.	18	3.25	21	5.34
Milcombe.5.	18	7.47	13	5.06
Swalcliffe.5.	8	2.18	22	6.18
Shutford.5.	21	5.05	30	7.94
Alkerton.5.	3	1.58	8	3.98
Hornton.5.	31	5.25	37	6.60
Mollington.5.	15	3.79	28	8.64
Wardington.5.	60	6.96	59	7.86
Thenford.5.	5	3.79	13	9.92
Deddington.6.	72	3.30	96	4.66
South Newington.6.	37	8.83	29	7.80
Wigginton.6.	7	2.87	21	6.77
Shennington.6.	17	3.89	30	8.04
Warmington.6.	14	3.97	34	8.25
Farnborough.6.	20	5.73	17	3.99
Claydon & Clattercote.6.	18	5.31	19	5.65
Edgcote.6.	3	3.89	5	5.21
Thorpe Mandeville.6.	9	5.96	13	8.55
Marston St.Lawrence.6.	10	1.85	10	1.95
Farthinghoe.6.	19	4.33	31	7.67
Charlton & Newbottle.6.	13	2.97	23	4.63
Aynhoe.6.	19	3.10	25	4.03
Worton.7.	4	2.72	8	5.93
Sibford.7.	30	3.34	63	8.32
Epwell.7.	16	4.85	24	7.89
Ratley & Upton.7.	17	3.61	11	2.96
Avon Dassett.7.	4	1.95	12	4.46
Aston le Walls.7.	14	8.33	10	8.33
Appletree.7.	3	3.49	7	11.11
Chipping Warden.7.	26	5.00	30	6.25
Culworth.7.	10	1.46	21	3.53
Greatworth.7.	9	6.66	8	3.83
Hinton in the Hedges.7.	3	1.91	-	-
Souldern.7.	10	1.62	27	4.59

Table Four, contd.

Parish & distance from Banbury (in miles)	1851 Migrants in Banbury	1851 Index Figure	1871 Migrants in Banbury	1871 Index Figure
North Aston.8.	4	1.30	4	1.46
Dunxs Tew.8.	7	1.55	10	2.65
Great & Little Tew.8.	15	1.93	14	1.80
Swerford.8.	11	2.50	9	2.06
Hook Norton.8.	48	3.21	48	3.81
Tysoe.8.	19	1.81	17	1.53
Radway.8.	12	3.49	19	5.41
Fenny Compton.8.	19	2.37	24	6.72
Boddington.8.	28	3.86	26	3.67
Eydon.8.	20	3.22	20	3.77
Sulgrave.8.	24	3.97	21	3.66
Croughton.8.	7	1.20	12	2.03
Somerton.8.	3	0.88	5	1.37
Steeple & Middle Aston.9.	3	0.43	12	1.42
Westcott Barton.9.	5	1.79	4	1.41
Middle Barton.9.	7		17	1.78
Sandford St.Martin.9.	8	1.52	8	1.68
Brailes.9.	18	1.38	50	3.23
Wormleighton.9.	1	0.51	4	1.98
Byfield.9.	17	1.66	13	1.55
Helmdon.9.	10	1.66	9	1.37
Brackley.9.	35	1.54	60	2.55
Evenley.9.	4	0.60	6	1.02
Fritwell.9.	4	0.78	4	0.72
Great & Little Rollright.10.	3	0.63	4	0.99
Whichford.10.	2	0.27	8	1.87
Cherrington.10.	1	0.29	-	-
Oxhill.10.	8	2.50	8	2.13
Kineton.10.	16	1.26	33	2.18
Gaydon.10.	4	1.40	-	-
Priors Hardwick.10.	1	0.33	8	2.39
Woodford.10.	9	1.13	8	2.39
Moreton Pinkney.10.	8	1.39	13	2.54
Lois Weedon & Weston.10.	5	0.92	4	0.74
Whitfield.10.	2	0.61	-	-
Turweston.10	1		1	0.27
Cottesford.10.	-	-	1	0.41
Stratton Audley.10.	3	0.98	-	-
Heyford.10.	15	1.49	11	1.02

Table Five

Attendances at church services in Banbury, 30 March 1851.

Source: PRO, HO 129/6/163, Census Papers, Ecclesiastical Returns, Banbury, 1851.

	Highest attendance	Proportion of total of highest attend - ances	Total attend- ances	Proportion of sum of total attend- ances
St. Mary's parish church	1300	42.03	3300	47.69
Wesleyan Methodist	558	18.04	1146	16.56
Primitive Methodist	212	6.85	515	7.44
Presbyterian/Unitarian	214	6.92	417	6.03
Independent	120	3.88	220	3.18
Baptist, Bridge St.	200	6.47	400	5.78
Baptist, West Bar.	70	2.26	120	1.73
Baptist, South Bar.	109	3.52	223	3.22
Quaker	60	1.95	99	1.43
Roman Catholic	250	8.08	480	6.94
Totals	3093		6920	
Total Methodists	770	24.89	1661	24.00
Total Old Dissent	713	23.05	1380	19.91

Table Six

Immigration into Banbury.

Sources: 1851 and 1871 Census Enumerators' Returns.

People born in:	Number living in Banbury 1851	Proportion of total population (8746) (1)	Number living in Banbury 1871	Proportion of total population (11,692) (1)	
Bedfordshire	37	0.42	67	0.57	
Berkshire	74	0.85	132	1.13	
Buckinghamshire	167	1.91	277	2.37	
Cambridgeshire	6	0.07	22	0.19	
Cheshire	6	0.07	15	0.13	
Cornwall	9	0.10	9	0.08	
Cumberland	5	0.06	5	0.04	
Derbyshire	11	0.12	15	0.13	
Devon	19	0.22	39	0.33	
Dorset	4	0.04	24	0.21	
Durham	8	0.09	8	0.07	
Essex	35	0.40	61	0.52	
Gloucestershire	127	1.45	137	1.17	(2)
Hampshire & IOW	27	0.31	34	0.29	
Herefordshire	5	0.06	16	0.14	
Hertfordshire	28	0.32	21	0.18	
Huntingdonshire	3	0.03	6	0.05	
Kent	32	0.36	37	0.32	
Lancashire	30	0.34	58	0.50	
Leicestershire	43	0.49	55	0.47	
Lincolnshire	12	0.14	36	0.31	
London	158	1.81	257	2.20	(3)
Middlesex	39	0.45	17	0.15	(4)
Norfolk	21	0.24	30	0.26	
Northamptonshire	651	7.44	940	8.04	(5)
Northumberland	5	0.06	5	0.04	
Nottinghamshire	10	0.11	11	0.09	
Rutland	2	0.02	4	0.03	
Salop	10	0.11	26	0.22	
Somerset	25	0.29	50	0.43	
Staffordshire	31	0.35	97	0.83	
Suffolk	11	0.12	21	0.18	
Surrey	38	0.43	24	0.21	(4)
Sussex	7	0.08	22	0.19	
Warwickshire	481	5.50	780	6.67	(6)
Westmorland	0	0.00	4	0.03	
Wiltshire	48	0.55	73	0.62	
Worcestershire	64	0.73	89	0.76	
Yorkshire	44	0.50	46	0.39	
Unknown butEnglish	69	0.79	19	0.16	
Scotland	24	0.27	49	0.42	
Wales	24	0.27	34	0.29	
Ireland	78	0.89	68	0.58	
Abroad	37	0.43	49	0.42	
Total from other counties & abroad	2562	29.29	3989	32.41	
Oxfordshire	1437	16.43	1935	16.56	
Total born outside Banbury	3999	45.72	5924	50.67	

NOTES: (1) The hamlet of Nethercote is excluded.(2) Excludes Shennington. Includes Bristol where Somerset is not specified. (3)Both Middlesex & Surrey portions. (4) Excludes London. (5) Excludes Grimsbury. (6)Includes all persons born in Shipston on Stour.

Table Seven

Dates of foundation of voluntary societies active in Banbury between 1830 and 1850.

Sources: Rusher's Banbury Lists and Direstories and contempory newspapers

Quasi-governmental bodies

Neithrop Association for the Prosecution of Felons	Before 1819
Banbury General Association for the Prosecution of Felons	1835
Mendicity Society	1834

Philanthropic Societies

Old Charitable Society	1782
Bank for Savings	1818
Visiting Charitable Society	1820
Labourer's Friend Society	1833
Banbury & Neithrop Clothing Society	1831
Medical Aid Society	By 1838
Dorcas Society	1842
Refuge Society	1845
Small Savings Society	1847

Friendly Societies

Weavers Arms	1832
Conservative Friendly Society	1837
White Horse Friendly Society	1837
Reindeer Club	By 1838
United Smiths	By 1838
Cock & Greyhound, Old Club	By 1838
White Hart	By 1838
Loyal Wellington Oddfellows, Independent Order	By 1839
United Christian Benefit Society	1840
Mutual Aid Society	1843
Reformers' Friendly Society	By 1843
Millwrights Arms	1840
British Queen Oddfellows, Independent Order	By 1843
Fountain of Liberty Oddfellows, Independent Order	By 1843
Rechabites	1844
Tradesmens Benefit Society	By 1844
Buck and Bell	By 1845
British Queen Oddfellows, Manchester Unity Order	1848

Religious Societies

British & Foreign Bible Society Auxiliary	1817
Society for the Propagation of the Gospel	By 1832
Church Missionary Society	1835
London Association for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews	1842
Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge	By 1846
Protestant Institute	1845
Naval & Military Bible Society	By 1846
China Missionary Society	By 1849
Church Choir	1835

Musical Societies	
Amateur Music Society	By 1835
Brass Band	1836
Harmonic Society	1840
Church Singers Society	By 1841
Temperance Brass Band	1844
Choral Society	1844
Philharmonic Society	1847
Educational & Cultural bodies	
National Schools Society	1817
Infants School	1835
Mechanics' Institute	1835
British Schools	1839
Flori-and Horticultural Society	1847
Political and Social Reforming bodies	
Anti-Slavery Association	1832
Temperance Society	1834
Agricultural Association	1834
Sports Club	
Cricket Club	1836

Table Eight

Occupations of children in Banbury in 1851 and 1871 (percentages).

Source: 1851 and 1871 Census Enumerators' Returns.

Age Group	1851 Home	1851 School	1851 Work	1871 Home	1871 School	1871 Work
2	73.21	26.79	-	97.10	2.90	-
3	54.31	45.69	-	64.29	35.71	-
4	44.55	55.45	-	45.49	54.51	-
5	31.60	68.40	-	31.73	68.27	-
6	21.35	78.65	-	30.55	69.45	-
7	19.16	80.84	-	25.54	74.46	-
8	22.12	77.40	0.48	21.72	78.28	-
9	18.85	80.63	0.52	19.43	78.76	0.81
10	17.01	78.35	4.64	20.00	78.21	1.79
11	19.02	73.37	7.61	23.26	73.61	3.13
12	22.16	65.27	12.57	18.00	68.80	13.20
13	19.51	54.64	25.85	20.83	54.17	25.00
14	23.27	34.59	42.14	17.31	37.31	45.38
15	18.72	18.72	62.56	20.40	20.40	59.20
16	18.33	6.28	75.39	13.52	8.20	78.28
17	13.13	2.40	84.43	14.22	4.89	80.89
18	19.53	0.59	79.88	12.70	2.46	84.84
2-10	33.86	65.54	0.60	40.74	58.99	0.27
5-10	21.80	77.29	0.91	25.08	74.50	0.42
11-14	20.84	57.48	21.68	19.94	58.86	21.20
11-18	19.44	32.70	47.86	17.69	24.93	47.38
7-11	19.27	78.21	2.52	22.06	76.76	1.18
2-18	27.55	51.18	21.27	30.59	48.39	21.02

Table Nine

Banbury: Occupational Structure in 1871.

Source: 1871 Census Enumerators' Returns.

	Total	Proportion of working population	Total	Proportion of working population	Total	Proportion of working population
1. Leisured class					149	2.87
2. Professional					269	5.18
3. Civil & Borough Service					61	1.18
4. Agricultural Traders					77	1.48
5. Transport, accommodation and food					445	8.57
5.1. Transport			172	3.31		
5.2. Drink Trade			249	4.80		
5.3. Other accommodation and food			24	0.46		
6. Retail Trade					601	11.58
6.1. Food			307	5.91		
6.2. Textiles			135	2.60		
6.3. Miscellaneous			159	3.07		
7. Crafts & Manufactures					1866	35.94
7.1. Small Scale Crafts &c			843	16.24		
7.1.1. Metal	104	2.01				
7.1.2. Leather	170	3.27				
7.1.3. Clothing	341	6.57				
7.1.4. Wood	138	2.66				
7.1.5. Fine Crafts	68	1.31				
7.1.6. Miscellaneous	22	0.42				
7.2. Building Trade			426	8.20		
7.2.1. Construction	364	7.01				
7.2.2. Manfr. & Sales	62	1.19				
7.3. Larger Scale Manufactures			597	11.50		
7.3.1. Textiles	102	1.97				
7.3.2. Engineering	495	9.53				
8. Agriculture and Horticulture					216	4.16
9. Domestic Service					928	17.87
10. Miscellaneous					580	11.17
10.1. Hawkers, scavengers &c			59	1.13		
10.2. Unclassified occupations			490	9.44		
10.3. Non-local and unknown occupations			31	0.60		
Totals					5192	100

Table 10

Numbers of Sunday School children from congregations in Banbury attending the Sunday School Centenary demonstration on 29 June 1880.

Sources: Banbury Advertiser, Banbury Guardian 1 July 1880

CHURCH OF ENGLAND		
St. Mary's	601	
Christ Church	280	
Temperance Hall	95	
Total		976
METHODIST		
Marlborough Road Wesleyan	600	
Grimsbury Wesleyan	400	
Primitive Methodist	165	
Total		1165
DISSENTING		
Society of Friends	66	
Unitarian	34	
Bridge Street Baptist	220	
Ebenezer Calvinistic Baptist	46	
Disciples of Christ	30	
Congregationalist	275	
Total		671
NON-DENOMINATIONAL		
Neithrop Mission	160	
Wood Green Lodge Class	34	
Workhouse	53	
Total		247
Sum Total		3059

Table Eleven

Results of Parliamentary elections in Banbury 1868-1880

Source: Poll Book for 1868, Banbury Public Library,
Banbury Guardian 5 Feb 1874, 1 April 1880.

	1868	1874	1880
Votes cast for Samuelson (Liberal)	772	760	1018
Liberal share of poll (percentage)	66.04	52.93	63.59
Votes cast for Conservatives (Stratton, Wilkinson, Bowles)	397	676	583
Conservative share of poll (percentage)	33.96	47.07	36.41
Bad Votes	-	5	9
Neutral Voters	355	309	238
Total number of registered electors	1524	1750	1848
Proportion of electorate who voted (percentage)	76.71	82.34	87.12

Bibliography

All of the works from which information on Banbury during the period under review has been taken are listed below. Some works quoted for purely comparative purposes, standard reference works and novels have not been included. In the nineteenth century it is difficult to make a firm distinction between manuscript and other sources, and several collections listed as documentary sources consist largely or in part of printed ephemera.

I. DOCUMENTARY SOURCES

OXFORD

1. Bodleian Library

i) Manuscripts.

a) Banbury Parish Records:
Tithe Map 30. Parish of Banbury, 1852.
William Wilson's Visiting Plans. 1850. D.D.Par.Banbury a.5 (R)
Map of Banbury, circa 1838.
Parish rate books.

b) Oxford Diocesan Records.
Letter Books of Samuel Wilberforce, Dep.d.209.
Diocesan Book, c.327,d.178, 549-50.
Nonconformist registration certificates, C644-47

ii) Printed Sources

Banbury election addresses, posters &c., 1831-68. G A Oxon, b.101.
Collection of newspaper cuttings relating to Banbury 1839-48, 6 vols. G A Oxon 8° 989-94.
Volume of pamphlets relating to Banbury, Oxon 8° 637.

2. Oxfordshire Record Office

a) Stockton, Sons and Fortescue Collection (No. 315)
Banbury Paving and Lighting Commission papers and accounts.
Banbury Reform Association minute books.
Bernhard Samuelson, election papers 1865-80.
Bernhard Samuelson, business papers.
Banbury Freehold Land Society, plans for estate in Grimsbury.
Thomas Draper, plans for property development &c.
Neithrop Association for the Prosecution of Felons, minutes &c.
Austin's Brewery, sundry papers, accounts &c.
Sundry property deeds.

b) Banbury Borough Corporation Collection.
Banbury Paving and Lighting Commission, minutes.
Banbury Board of Health, minutes.
Banbury Watch Committee, minutes.
Banbury British Schools, log books.

c) Other Collections.
Banbury Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, minutes &c.
Banbury National School, log books.
Banbury Library (Arkell) Collection, deeds &c.

3. Regent's Park College Library.
W.T.Henderson, Recollections of his Life (MS).

4. Manchester College Library.
Sundry accounts &c. relating to Banbury Unitarian Church.

LONDON

5. Public Record Office
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1851 Census Enumerators' Books, HO 107.
1851 Ecclesiastical Census, HO 129/6/163.
1861 Census Enumerators' Books, RG 9.
1871 Census Enumerators' Books, RG 10.
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Non-Parochial Registers, RG 2/2919, 9440.

6. Dr. William's Library.
Edward Cobb, Some Traditions and Historical Recollections relating to the Presbyterian Meeting House at Banbury, 1888 (MS).

7. Transport House Library.
Vincent MSS.

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8. Banbury Public Library

a) Manuscripts:
Banbury Political Correspondence, 1832.
The Correspondence of Henry William Tancred, MP, 1841-59.
Banbury Mechanics' Institute, minutes, accounts, sundry papers.
Banbury Board of Guardians, minutes 1835-36
Banbury and Neithrop Clothing Society, minutes.
Banbury Association for the Prosecution of Felons, minutes &c.
Memorandum to accompany the General Return on the 1870 Education Act.

b) Collections consisting principally of printed ephemera:
Potts Collection (11 volumes).
Rusher Collection.
Brooks Collection.
Walford Collection.
Hurst Collection.
Cases A,B,C, D, E, E1, E2, F, G, M, W.
Banbury Cuttings, 1838-42.
Grangerised version of Alfred Beesley, History of Banbury, 1841, 12 volumes

9. Marlborough Road Methodist Church, Banbury.
Records of Banbury Wesleyan Circuit, minutes of quarterly meetings and local preachers' meetings, schedules, preaching plans, baptismal registers.
Records of Banbury Primitive Methodist Circuit, baptismal registers, schedules &c.
Records of Banbury Wesleyan Church, property deeds, trust minutes and accounts, Sunday school registers &c.
Records of Grimsbury Wesleyan Church, Neithrop Wesleyan Mission Hall, Windsor Street Branch Sunday School, Calthorpe Street Mission.
Brailsford Collection of printed ephemera.

10. Banbury United Reformed Church.
Church Book, Banbury Independent Church 1794.
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Church Minutes and Accounts 1853 et seq.
Baptismal registers.

11. Baptist Church, Horsefar, Banbury.
Property deeds, portraits, &c. relating to Bridge Street Chapel.

12. Cheney & Sons, printers, Calthorpe Street, Banbury.
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ELSEWHERE

13. Baptist Church, Middleton Cheney.
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14. Northamptonshire Record Office, Delapré Abbey, Northampton.
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17. D.G.W.Brown, Esq., Sunderland.
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Report of the Assistant Hand Loom Weavers Commissioners, 1840, XXIV.
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THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF BANBURY BETWEEN 1830 AND 1880.
Barrie Stuart Trinder.
Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Leicester, 1980.

The period between the Reform Bill and the Agricultural Depression was one of the 'golden ages' of the English market town. Some towns enjoyed at this time a new lease of prosperity, and at the same time gained an unusual degree of freedom from aristocratic and government control. Banbury was one of the foremost market towns of nineteenth century England. Although its population in the middle of the century was less than ten thousand, as a market centre it was comparable with many county towns of vastly greater size. In this study the changing economy of the town is closely analysed, and the effects of the opening of railways, the rise of an engineering industry, and the increase in the size of shops duly observed. Banbury was a parliamentary borough, contested in all but one of the elections between the First and Third Reform Acts, and almost every religious denomination of consequence was represented in the town. Its society was deeply polarised, and the effects of this polarisation on the local economy, on the provision of relief to the needy, and on local culture, are one of the main concerns of the study. Attention is also given to the physical growth of the town, the effects of its division into municipal and non-municipal parts, and the roles of speculators and land societies in the creation of new housing. The range of sources on nineteenth century Banbury is exceptionally wide. The experiences of the inhabitants of Banbury in this period in many ways reflected those of market towns in general, and this study throws light on a wide range of problems concerning the common experiences of many nineteenth century Englishmen, and about a certain, often neglected, type of urban community in particular.