

From the Chair

It is gratifying to report the many favourable comments that we have received following the Christmas edition of 224: the only thing lacking so far has been the flood of additional information, suggestions and corrections that we hoped for from our knowledgeable members. So I will repeat my appeal for anyone with information to add to please get in touch. We shall be delighted to publish an update.

So far as I can judge, the Society is still healthy and fulfilling a need. The January meeting was abandoned, but only because of the weather. We could have continued, but we felt that the whole membership ought to have the chance to hear what should be a fascinating talk on the ancient forest of Wychwood. Charles Tyzack's generous offer to return to speak in March clinched it.

Let me know if you would like things done differently. From the committee's perspective it is still the case that the Society depends on the efforts of a very few enthusiastic people. We need one or two more members to help with specific tasks. None of our tasks is too onerous!

Chris Day

Programme for the rest of 2003

12 March: Charles Tyzack, *The decline and fall of Wychwood Forest*

9 April: Leo de Freitas, *Cheney's and Rusher's chapbooks*. Chapbooks were an early form of cheap literature (stories and ballads), distributed by itinerant chapmen. Cheney's and Rusher's were noted local printers.

May: *Visit to the Chiltern Open Air Museum*. Details to be confirmed.

11 June: *Visit and summer social at Castle House, Deddington*. By kind invitation of Mrs V Pleydell-Bouverie.

Dating the oldest hedges in the parish of Deddington

If a hedge has five woody species (not counting woody climbers, like dog rose and ivy), such as ash, elder, English elm, common hawthorn and hazel, is it 500 years old? If the hedge is in Deddington parish, the short answer is 'probably not': most of our hedges date from the 1808 Parliamentary Enclosure Act. Nevertheless, there is a relationship between age and species number, just as there is a relationship between my age and the number of books in our house. This relationship, referred to as Hooper's Rule, is fully discussed in Oliver Rackham's book, *The History of the Countryside*, pp 191-204. Rackham makes it clear that the best way to verify the use of the rule is to compare the results of a hedge survey with an old map. We can do this for the part of Deddington parish now called

Ilbury Farm, near Hempton.

Open fields are the main feature of the two earliest maps of the parish, the first prepared by Thomas Jefferys - 'Geographer to His Majesty' - dated 'MDCCLXVI & VII' (1766 and 1767), which can be seen in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. More often used for documentation of Deddington parish before enclosure is the Richard Davis of Lewknor map, called 'A New Map of the County of Oxfordshire', published 1 August 1797, and available in the Centre for Oxfordshire Studies, Oxford. 'Open Fields' is written across this map, below the central village. A more specialized map, older than those by Jefferys and Davis, is available for the 'Manor of Yelburie' (*sic*), dated 1619, and archived in Magdalen College, Oxford. The Yelburie map shows in

Applying Hooper's Rule to Ilbury hedges

Hedge no	Average no species in 30m	Date hedge first marked on a map	Estimated by Hooper's Rule	Agreement
<i>A Hedges along the Chipping Norton road</i>				
H9	3	1619	1702	Satisfactory
H10	4	1619	1602	Good
H11	4	1619	1602	Good
H12	4	1793	1602	Poor
<i>B Hedges off the Nether Worton road</i>				
H8	2.5	1793	1752	Good
H7	2.58	—	1744	Not possible
H43	3.55	—	1647	Not possible
H44	3.25	—	1677	Not possible
H48	3.70	1619	1632	Good
<i>C Hedges running off the Nether Worton road</i>				
H6	2.37	1619	1764	Poor
H46	2	1619	1802	Poor
H5	1	1619	1902	Poor
<i>D Hedges on the Duns Tew road and at right angles to it</i>				
H498	3.9	1619	1612	Good
H495	3.42	1619	1660	Good

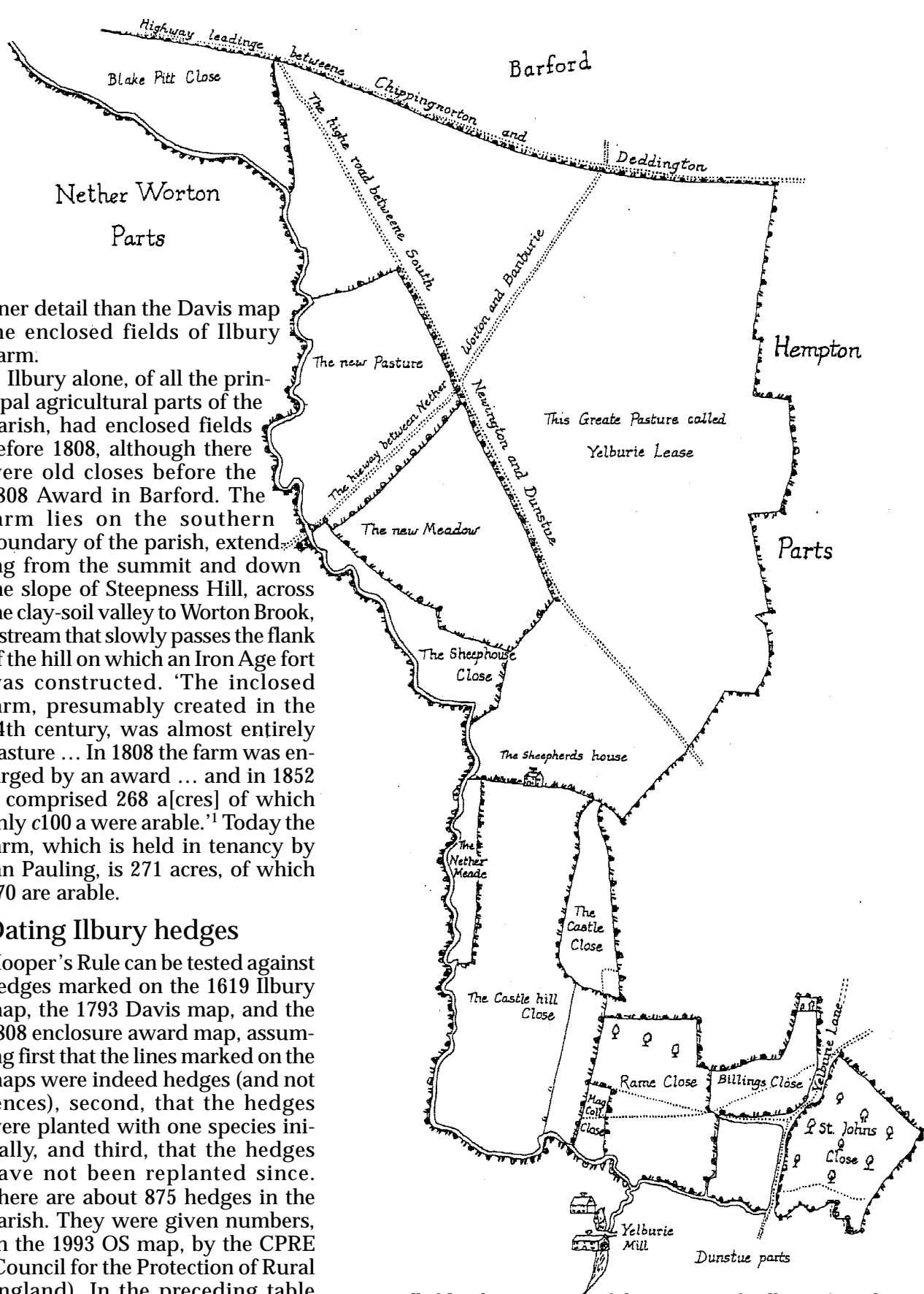
finer detail than the Davis map the enclosed fields of Ilbury Farm.

Ilbury alone, of all the principal agricultural parts of the parish, had enclosed fields before 1808, although there were old closes before the 1808 Award in Barford. The farm lies on the southern boundary of the parish, extending from the summit and down the slope of Steepness Hill, across the clay-soil valley to Worton Brook, a stream that slowly passes the flank of the hill on which an Iron Age fort was constructed. 'The inclosed farm, presumably created in the 14th century, was almost entirely pasture ... In 1808 the farm was enlarged by an award ... and in 1852 it comprised 268 [acres] of which only c100 were arable.'¹ Today the farm, which is held in tenancy by Ian Pauling, is 271 acres, of which 170 are arable.

Dating Ilbury hedges

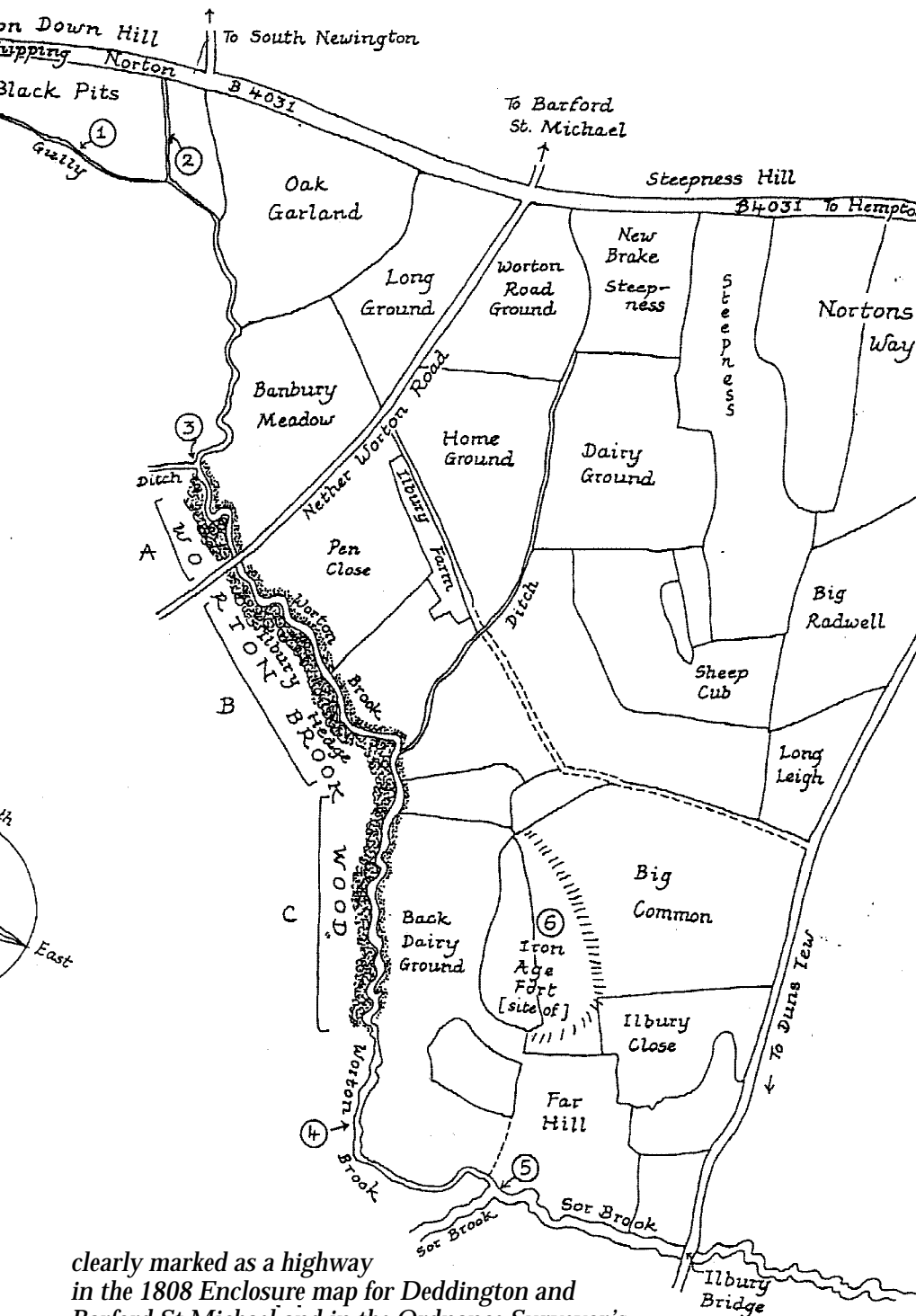
Hooper's Rule can be tested against hedges marked on the 1619 Ilbury map, the 1793 Davis map, and the 1808 enclosure award map, assuming first that the lines marked on the maps were indeed hedges (and not fences), second, that the hedges were planted with one species initially, and third, that the hedges have not been replanted since. There are about 875 hedges in the parish. They were given numbers, on the 1993 OS map, by the CPRE (Council for the Protection of Rural England). In the preceding table hedge numbers are shown in this way: 'H9, H10 ...'

Fourteen hedges were surveyed, and average numbers of species per 30m length calculated. The table shows the results. For six hedges there is a good agreement between the dates, and H9 is probably acceptable. In the B set, there is the anomaly that three hedges, clearly old hedges, ie older than 1793, are not shown on the Davis map. For



Map 1 [left]: The 1619 map of the Mannor of Yelburie (now known as Ilbury Farm). The original of this map belongs to Magdalen College, Oxford and is held in their archive. The 'Yelburie' map is the earliest map showing both the Ilbury Hedge, which we know to have been planted in 1591, and the farm fields little changed in their boundaries since then. Gone are such places as 'The Shepherds house' and 'Yelburie Mill', but most of the fields are now, and were before the encloures of 1808, exactly as they were in 1619.

Yelburie Lane is now the Duns Tew road (see map 2); the long highway between South Newington and Duns Tew, running mainly WNW to ESE across the expanse of the farm, is no more. Instead there are pieces of a 'high road': paved from the Nether Worton road to the farmhouse; and a muddy track from there to the Duns Tew road. It is non-existent to the west, though it is



clearly marked as a highway in the 1808 Enclosure map for Deddington and Barford St Michael and in the Ordnance Surveyor's drawing of 1814. By 1880-81 the six-inch map does not even show a footpath in the north-western sector: today there is just a right of way finger post pointing south-east from the Chipping Norton road.

Map 2 [right]: Ilbury Farm and surrounding area, including Worton Brook Wood in 2000. The three sections into which study of the Worton Brook Wood has been divided are marked as A (west), B (middle) and C (east). The map shows vegetation along the brook occurring mainly on one side, the side planted with the Ilbury Hedge in 1591.

Black Pits, formerly called Blake Pitt Close, is thought to be the field where victims of the Black Death were buried in the fourteenth century. 1 is the gully descending from the vicinity of Worton Grounds Farm (formerly Black Jane Farm); 2 is the sometimes-wet ditch, now without a hedge, which joins 1; at 3 a watery ditch from Iron Down Hill joins Worton Brook: here begin the plantings of oak trees in Ilbury Hedge.

Another point of reference is 4, where the hedge changes, is less well-maintained, and there are no oak trees, but a steady accession of alder; 5 is the end of Worton Brook at the junction of Worton Brook and Sor Brook; and finally, 6 is the site of the Iron Age fort, now a scrub wood on the north-eastern side and a pasture on the south-western side.

H12, the rule significantly over-estimates the age of the hedge. In the C set, the age is significantly underestimated, possibly a consequence of replanting. In the hedges of the Duns Tew road, the degree of correspondence is excellent. Hooper's Rule may thus be acceptable for two thirds of the hedges, but not for the remaining third.

An invitation to measure hedges

If members would like to measure hedges, we could meet to do this in May or June. The method commonly used, in following Hooper's Rule, is summarized in four steps: (1) Start from one end of a hedge, and pace off 30m. Thirty metres is the basic unit of all measured lengths. (2) Walk along the length and note each species; write down the total number of species in that section. (3) Repeat the procedure for each 30m length until the whole hedge has been surveyed. (4) Add up the total for each section and divide by the number of sections. The total of that division is the putative age of the hedge. Good luck!

My thanks to John Killick, editor of *The Flora of Oxfordshire*, for suggesting that I end chapter 2 of the work in progress on the plant species and habitats of Deddington with a test of Hooper's Rule, and for reviewing the result; Dr Tim Rich, of the Department of Botany, National Museums and Galleries, Cardiff, for reviewing the essay and contributing a better table of the results; Edith Gollnast, of the City of Oxford Planning Department for the maps, and to Wendy Meagher for editing all of Chapter 2 from which this piece is taken.

Walter L Meagher

Source: (1) *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: A History of Oxfordshire*, Vol XI, edited by C R Elrington. Oxford, 1983. p 99.

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The railways of north Oxfordshire

In January 2000 we heard author and photographer Laurence Waters speak on the subject of the railways in north Oxfordshire. This was a fascinating, and sometimes hilarious, insight into the development of 'God's Wonderful Railway' beyond its original route, bringing the broad gauge up to Oxford and eventually to Banbury. It remained seven foot until its abolition in 1892.

The original GWR line cost £3m to construct from London to Bristol and was laid out by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, reaching there by 1841. Steventon, west of Didcot, was the station for Oxford, and the GWR's HQ until the Oxford branch was built. An 1835 projected line to Oxford was never built, the University objected as it had shares in the canal. It eventually came in via Didcot in the 1840s, stopping short of the Thames at Western Road.

The station building was roofed over its whole width, and as with all the early stations including Paddington, was built in wood. At that time a simple halt could be built for just £250 per side of the track. Initially many of the halts had only one platform, with a system of accident-prone points if it was on double track. The main station building was usually on the up side when there were two platforms.

The GWR extension reached Banbury in 1850 (Aynho for Deddington was our local station) and then ran on to Rugby. It ran initially with just one engine as a shuttle service on a single track that was later doubled, and on to Birmingham only in 1852.

Because Banbury station was built of wood and glass, after World War II, drivers were not allowed to blow off steam because of the risk of losing the station roof! As there was no town gas the GWR made its own to light Banbury station.

In 1910 the GWR opened a line via Princes Risborough to Aynho from Paddington—a cut of 19 miles in the journey to Birmingham. Brunel was a great advocate of speed as part of the 'perfection of travel' and luggage, which was kept on the roof, was sometimes shed at speed. He once drove, and crashed, the 'special' that opened a new line! 'Our' line, now running from Marylebone, was singled-tracked in the 'sixties and has only just been doubled again.

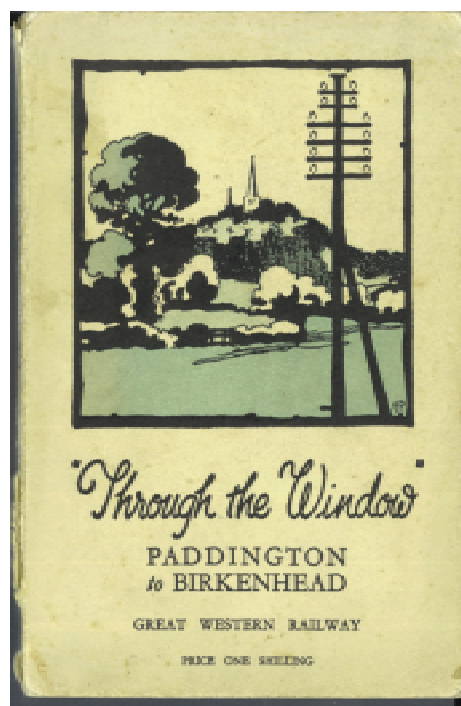
The first timetables were printed in *The Times*—with no arrival times as early engines were not very reliable. If a train did not arrive the station-master had to send another engine out to find it, on the same track, and it often had to reverse rapidly or risk 'thrusting the other train off the track'. The early engines were brakeless, with only a brake on the tender, or perhaps the first carriage. In an emergency the driver would simply reverse. Luckily broad gauge trains did not often fall over, because of their inherent stability. Banbury had steam until 1969 on Bristol to Newcastle trains.

By 1897 the Bloxham line opened, and was 'direct' to Cheltenham by 1906, with trains running from Newcastle to Bristol (Port to Port). Only freight services ran after 1951, and the central section later closed totally after a major landslip, but the Chipping Norton end stayed open to 1964 from Kingham.

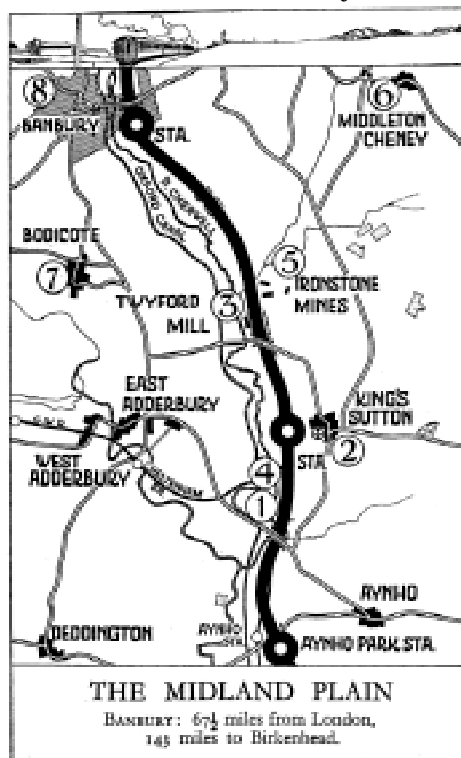
Banbury Station was rebuilt in 1958 and remodelled in 2001.

Ironstone railways ran to all the quarries in the Hook Norton-Bloxham-Adderbury area, some of them narrow gauge, and also north from Banbury to Wroxton. They handled up to two million tons of ore a year and the line employed 20 locomotives: it closed in 1966. The Banbury munitions factory of World War I also had a railway, now buried under the M40.

Never mentioned by name, but ever present, was the spirit of Dr



The cover and a map from *Through the Window*, a 1/- guide published by the GWR to its Paddington to Birkenhead line, via Banbury.



Beeching who did so much damage to the network: at one time very few places in Oxford were more than three or four miles from a station.

If undelivered please return to: Deddington & District History Society, c/o 37 Gaveston Gardens, Deddington OX15 0NX. 224 is the newsletter of the Deddington & District History Society, published three times a year and distributed free to members.

The Society meets on the second Wednesday of the month during the season, normally at the Windmill Centre in Deddington. Membership £8/14 pa single/couples, or £2 per meeting at the door.

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