

## A Manuscript History of Summertown

By H. MINN

SOME years ago the Bodleian Library was fortunate enough to acquire a manuscript volume by J. Badcock entitled :

‘ Summer-Town

1820-1832

Origin, History and Description of Summer-Town,  
written in the Autumn of 1832.

Inscribed to The Rev. Wm. Birkett Allen, D.C.L.  
(the first appointed Minister) ’

The text runs to 112 pages and is accompanied by a plan showing the lay-out of the original building-plots in the suburb. The volume (Top. Oxon. c 240) was given to the Library by the late T. W. Hodges, and is described briefly in *Oxoniensia*, II, 205 ff. by Mr. E. A. Greening Lamborn in connexion with his account of the remains of Beaumont Palace now standing in the grounds of no. 302 Woodstock Road (see p. 159 below). As the story of the growth of Summertown recorded by Badcock has seemed worthy of more extensive quotation than could be given by Mr. Lamborn in his brief note, I have been led to prepare the present article.

John Badcock, the author of this little history, came to reside in Summer-town in the year 1830. He had previously lived at Watlington and came to Oxford, when a widower, to be near his son, the sole survivor of his children. The youth had matriculated to Pembroke<sup>1</sup> College in 1829, but died seven years afterwards.

When he came to Summertown the village consisted of about ninety houses, the first of which had been built in 1820, with a population of about 517, all being within the parish of St. Giles in the north suburb of Oxford. The enclosure of St. Giles's fields took place in 1829, after which the north area was divided into building plots and by 1832 the population had increased to 562.

Badcock writes how he passes his days peaceably ‘ withdrawn from the world and occasionally favoured with the soul reviving converse of a few friends who rank among the justly worthy of the earth ’. His little library and his pen are his only everyday companions. His pen he fortunately

<sup>1</sup> Not Worcester College, as stated in *Oxoniensia*, II, 206.

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employs in recording in this little history all the particulars he could collect as to the origin of Summertown, the date of the erection of the several houses, a list of the inhabitants with their various occupations, and their characters, both good and bad. For the use of the first vicar he records who in each family is able to read, whether the family possesses a Bible and also to what spiritual denomination, if any, they belong. He excuses himself from appearing inquisitive, but assures his readers that it does not arise from any rude or improper curiosity but only from a desire to leave a faithful account of the now rising little village. He opens with a glowing description of the amenities of the site :

‘ In the year 1820 the varied crops of Corn grew up clothing in rich green array and the harvest bended in golden ripeness over the then open fields on which this healthy village was soon afterwards planted.’

He describes also the view bounded by the hills of Wytham and Elsfield, the village's situation on the two high roads branching from St. Giles's Church, and the Banbury road adorned with plantations of young forest trees and evergreens with a good footpath along its eastern margin.

This raised footpath to which Badcock refers was begun in 1820, and extended from Oxford along the east side of the Banbury Road to Wolvercote, thence through Horselow Field Road (now Five Mile Drive) and back along the west side of the Woodstock Road to Oxford, the intent being to provide a good dry walk for undergraduates of about five miles from and to St. Giles's ; hence the saying, ‘ a Walk round the Five Mile ’. The footpath was here and there separated from the road by plantations of trees, the last of which, that extending from St. Margaret's Road to Linton Road, was cut down about 1880 and the site thrown into the road. There still remains a short length of this raised path on the Woodstock Road at Wolvercote, where the footpath is separated from the road by a fence.

Badcock prepared a rough plan of the village in plots (FIG. 22), with the aid of which it is possible to identify all the houses now remaining of those he describes. He starts from the Diamond Hall and passes north along the east side of the Banbury Road.

Before 1820 Diamond Hall (PL. XIV, B) was the only house on the east side of the Banbury Road. It was a lonely wayside inn, ‘ and if legendary tales whisper truth was the scene of many a dark deed ’. The first mention of the inn is in Tom Warton's comic satire on ‘ the Oxford Guide ’ 1760. It had ceased to be an inn about 1790, and had been divided into four small tenements when Badcock wrote. The site is now (PL. XIV, A) Diamond Terrace (nos. 194-198 Banbury Road).

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'About a quarter of a mile north of the Diamond House', says Badcock, 'begins the newly erected Village, the proper founder of which is a Mr. James Lambourn a native of Cumnor.' Badcock weaves quite a little romance around his founding of the village. Lambourn is a dealer who in his travels meets with a 'good tempered maiden of fine slim form, tall figure, brunette countenance beneath her stylish black Beaver'. She also travels with small merchandise. The twain marry and tour the country in a horse caravan. Both were familiar with these roads and fields and fancying no spot in England so pleasant, he purchased a piece of ground on which to fix their more permanent habitation. In the autumn of 1820, while he was away horse-dealing, she remained in the caravan on the site collecting stone and materials with her own hands for the building of the house. Later, when other houses were built nearby, he got one Costar (a painter and glazier in St. Aldate's) to paint him a sign board 'James Lambourn horsedealer Somers Town' at a cost of 4s. 6d. Not being a man of letters, he thus spelt it, but he often told Badcock that his meaning was to name it after that delightful season of the year 'Summer' on account of its being in his eye the 'pleasanteest place in all England'. This sign board must without doubt have been the origin of the name of the village.

### *Banbury Road, east side.*

'The new Village commences about a quarter of a mile north of the old Diamond House, the first building is a white cement tolerably good house standing about a stone's cast from the road in a green lane and fronting Oxford. Adjoining it is a neat sashed cottage, built about 1823. The house is the property of Mr. Cox manciple of St. John's College, the cottage belongs to Baven, boots at the Angel.'

These houses can be identified as the two still standing in the lane leading to Summerfields School.

'The next in order being the first on the line facing the Road is a brick building with a pigeon loft and a small whitewashed cottage adjoining with a green trellis work in front, erected in 1831.

Adjoining these two (PL. XV, A) is a plain brick house with sash windows forming two tenements, one occupied by Geo : Morris as a beer shop "the Red Lion", the other by Angelo Campino an Italian, maker of weather glasses. The space in front of these two is divided into arbours and a skittle alley for the Amusement of Morris's customers . . . These four tenements belong to one Orpwood who keeps a Public House in Saint Thomas Oxford.'

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The whole site of these is now occupied by Organ's Garage, nos. 240-254 Banbury Road. Campino's barometers are still occasionally seen in Oxford and the neighbourhood.

'Next to these is a Green Lane [now Summerfield Road] at the end of the Lane is a low pavilion lately the property of Mr. Rich : Spiers of Oxford who recently sold it to Tom Peake of the Mitre Coffee House in the High Street.'

Returning back to the road the first house north of the lane 'is the "King's Arms" a respectable looking brick edifice with bow windows. These premises were erected and a bowling green and gardens laid out in the year 1824 by one Dennis Downs, a native of Guernsey formerly an excellent gardener and sober man.' Downs's career gives Badcock occasion to moralize at some length on the evil of sipping too deeply of ardent liquors.

'Next to the Inn is the dwelling place of the noted Founder of the Village Lambourn a tight firm built active man and round as a bakers rolling pin who with his wife three children and their man Boss comprise the household next to that in which the writer of these Accounts at present sojourns.'

The King's Arms and Lambourn's house have both been demolished, but Badcock's residence can, from his description and plan, be identified as the existing no. 258 Banbury Road (PL. xv, B), built in 1824. Badcock describes it as his little 'Nut Shell' for he occupies only the south half of the house his neighbour in the other half being one Mr. Trash. He describes at some length the little house and its amenities, his pretty flower garden and grass plot in front, how from his window he can watch the numerous carriages passing and repassing or members of the University in graceful costume or other parties walking in social converse, and his view to the Wytham hills. Here he lives very peacefully, tended by his old faithful maidservant who had served his family for twenty-four years.

'The next premises separated from us on Mr. Trash's side by a low brick wall are two neat uniform brick tenements in an exact line with ours having a narrow archway between them through which is a passage leading to a third house of similar size and style at the end of a flower garden, built by Mr. Ivery in 1822-3 with the fatherly intention of bequeathing them as a legacy to each of his three daughters.'

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These still stand, being nos. 260-262 Banbury Road (PL. xv, B). Next to these are three small tenements built about 1822 with narrow strips of garden in front enclosed with a low paling (now nos. 268-270).

‘Beyond this is a comfortable house [now no. 274 Banbury Road] of two parlours in front built by Mr. John Perkins in 1830. The space in front to the Road is laid out in great taste with pretty flower beds and greensward.’

Diamond Street or, as it is now called, Mayfield Road, branches off here. Turning into Diamond Street Badcock describes four rough-cast cottages on the south side, the first of which was used as the Sunday School with about forty-five mixed scholars, built in 1824-5. These may be those now existing, but, if so, the rough-cast has been removed. On the north side he describes two neat, cheerful brick houses standing singly :

‘The first is pretty standing in a pleasant greensward and garden approached by stone steps. Here Mr. Jos : Lamb Wickens carries on an extensive Manufactory of Band Boxes which being set out to dry on the turf, the variety of coloured patterns makes a novel and pleasing appearance, the house was built by Wm. Carter an Iron Founder in 1824, who also erected temporary buildings and for a time carried on his business there . . . Beyond in the Lane at the end of the street is St. Giles Workhouse, a plain stone edifice of 16 commodious rooms built in 1824.’

This was at a cost of £800, the money being lent on bonds by a few parishioners. In 1835 St. Giles’s parish was united to the Headington Union, but only about half the money had been repaid. After some litigation the building was sold in 1838, but fetched only £300, and St. Giles’s Vestry in June, 1839, agreed to a voluntary rate to pay off the debt on the bonds.

Returning to the Banbury Road the first house north of Diamond Street he describes as a good brick house one of the best contrived in the new village and occupied by Miss Bland, as a school for young ladies. She is a sensible pious young lady, worthy of every encouragement, but not a member of the Established Church.

‘Next beyond this is the principal village shop for grocery, baking bread and Sunday dinners, conducted by Mr. Woodhouse. These two houses were built in 1821 and 1822 [the site is that of nos. 276-277 Banbury Road].’ . . . ‘In a straight line from Woodhouse’s and adjoining his are eight tidy whitewashed tenements (PL. xv, c), under one continuous roof, for poor families, they have little slips of garden reaching

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to the road and were built in 1823 by one Pharaoh a coal-dealer in Oxford. His widow receives a weekly rent of 2s. 9d. from each.'

The site of these (nos. 278-290, Banbury Road) is that of the North Oxford Garage, and portions of one or two of the cottages still remain, being converted into garages. These cottages are the last described by Badcock on the east side of the Banbury Road, and it was not until some fifty years later that any further development was made.

'Here finishes the portion of our Village situate on the eastern side of the Banbury Road and which was a separate property from that upon which the other and larger part of the Village is planted on the western side. The part I have hitherto been describing (excepting a portion of the front gardens made from the waste and filling up of gravel pits by the road side) belonged to a Mr. Edward Bayliss a baker in Holywell Oxford who parcelled it out from his pasture and field about 1820 and sold it for building plots.'

### *Banbury Road, west side.*

'What remains to be described is that part of the Village lying between the two main roads. This land was formerly a farm called Whoreston Farm.'

On the west side of Banbury Road there was at this time only one house south of Double Ditch, the Diamond Farm which, Badcock says, was being erected as he was writing his history in 1832. The farm was a small stone building lying a short distance back from the Banbury Road and a little north of the site of the present Moreton Road (PL. XVI, A).

Starting from Double Ditch, passing north, the first building 'on the high road is a neat stone house [now no. 267 Banbury Road] built about 1832, the property of Mr. Crews Dudley a solicitor of Oxford and occupied by Jas : Hobson and his wife who keeps a school for young ladies, has many scholars, and is kind and useful among the poor in the Village.' From its situation and the views he thinks this one of the most desirable residences in the village. Just beyond a short road turns left (now Church Street). Over this road and 'close by is a Gothic Structure of curious appearance, erected in 1831 by Mr. C. Brown a wine merchant in Oxford. Between this and the corner of Bates's nursery is a stone house of plain architecture' [nos. 275 and 277 : both have been enlarged].



*South Parade.*

'Return now to Hobson's garden enter the cross road, hitherto called Double Ditch (and so called by old residents of Summertown to this day) but now as houses and gardens along the north side of it connect our quarter of the Village on the Banbury road with that on the Woodstock Road it may in the future obtain the better appellation of Union Street.' . . . 'The first elevation after turning into Union Street is a plain rather lofty brick building divided into two tenements one a Beer shop called the "Rising Sun" with a Skittle Alley kept by Richard Timms a mason by trade the other a school for little boys kept by Mrs. Rose a widow' [nos. 1 and 2 South Parade].

Here Badcock moralizes at some length on the evils of beer shops, and says that within two years no less than six have been opened in the village. The next house is a low brick house inhabited by Wm. Dumbleton, parish clerk and shoemaker, and adjoining this a whitewashed cottage in two tenements (site of nos. 3 and 4 : Oxford Co-operative Society).

'Next to this is a showy white house standing a few yards back from the road fenced off with iron palisades, a beautiful woodbine climbs the portico and front of the house [nos. 5 and 6]. Mr. Henry North the proprietor a builder erected this house in 1823 and inhabits one half of it with his active industrious wife and his sister, a person of stately correctness. They let the other half to persons who occasionally resort hither to breathe the fine pure air for a season.'

Beyond and nearly adjoining North's is a neat brick house built about 1824 by Mr. Marson for forty-one years butler of Jesus College, who resides in it (no. 7). Next to this is a small neat dwelling built by Hughes a cooper in 1830, and all beyond up to George Street a garden belonging to Thurland, cook at Jesus College. Crossing over the Middlerow road (now George Street), there is first a garden plot belonging to one Hainge a coachman with his dwelling house where his wife sells grocery, bread and bacon (still a general shop). Adjoining this, he adds, Hainge has lately set up a beer shop called the Albion, and three small tenements which he lets (nos. 15-19), all erected in 1823. 'A short distance beyond these premises is a rather imposing house set back in a paddock of two or three Acres called Lark Hill erected in 1824.' This house he says is ill contrived and often to let (now no. 23 ; altered and enlarged and used for the school and clinic). Near to this is a thin neat house built about 1823 occupied by an aged couple named Davenport, formerly a tailor in Oxford (? no. 24).

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'All the houses along Double Ditch front the South and have a fine view of Oxford with its venerable turrets.'

### *Woodstock Road.*

'Turning right hand, round the corner, the first House on the Woodstock Road and the first that was built on that Road, belongs to Robert Rouse a cabinet-maker, who built this habitation for himself and entered it with his wife and son, then one year old, in June 1823.'

As late as 1880 the son was residing in and using the premises as an organ builder: the site is that of the City Motor Company's garage, nos. 264 and 266 Woodstock Road ((PL. XVII, A).

'Running from Rouses are a number of irregular dwellings and two alleys, one of four tenements and the other of six, and also three angles of a sort of square called Seal's Buildings erected by Seal between 1823 and 1830 his own house in the centre being a beer house.'

All these have been condemned as insanitary and demolished, only the building formerly the beer house, the Black Horse, now remaining (no. 274).

'Beyond are six uniform cottages of brick [nos. 286-296] standing a few paces back on a bank with flower beds in front, called Crappers Row being built by one of that name formerly a clothes cleaner and sexton of St. Giles Church.'

A little distance farther on after passing a part of Bates's Nursery (site of Osberton Road) is the carriage approach to Kimber's (The Avenue, no. 302 Woodstock Road) erected in 1823, a well looking white house of the first magnitude in Summertown with a fine garden and a large paddock with a pleasing view of the house in front to the Woodstock Road. Re-erected in the garden on the south side of the house are the last remains of Beaumont Palace, the preservation of which we owe to Badcock, who saved them from destruction when Beaumont Street, Oxford, was in making in 1830. Photographs of this arch and a summary of Badcock's account of it were published by E. A. G. Lamborn in *Oxoniensia*, II, 205 ff.

'The last house on the Woodstock Road about a furlong from Kimbers is a tolerable building, divided into two tenements, in the corner of a field called Couchy Piece [site of nos. 312-314]. Here the village ends except for Mrs. Sykes' a handsome Bath stone house built in 1830 at the extreme northern end of the Parish, it is a very desirable residence' [now enlarged as the Field House, an annexe to St. Edward's School].



*Squitchey Lane and George Street.*

Badcock turns right here (PL. XVII, B) through the Green Road (Squitchey Lane) to Oak Lane (now George Street). He calls it Oak Lane because at the junction of the two lanes stood a fine oak tree which when 'Messrs. Kimber and Dudley bought and parcelled out the land they mutually agreed to reserve the soil of the road and the ornamental Oak Tree near the termination of the central road which they will not lop or fell for twenty years.' The tree, after some opposition, was felled in 1924 when the area was developed for building. Turning south the first house he describes is the white-fronted dwelling of Mr. Joseph Bates (now called The Firs). He says that Mr. Bates was :

'A famous nursery man who came to this place about eight years back from High Wycombe and whose nursery here covering about twelve acres and extending from the Banbury Road across the middle way to the Woodstock Road and from the front of his house southwards to Westall's Piece, etc., now the Churchyard, planted as it is with trees and elegant shrubs and presenting in summer the gayest colouring of flowers in rich profusion is a striking and pleasing feature of the Village. Free permission to wander in this nursery is at all times permitted by Mr. Bates.'

From this point to South Parade Badcock describes several small tenements, but it is difficult to identify any now remaining owing to recent changes in this part of George Street. He also mentions the four small cottages still in Church Street.

'This portion of the Village between the two Turnpike Roads altogether being sixty two acres was purchased by Messrs. Kimber and Dudley of the late Mr. North a solicitor of Woodstock in October 1820. These gents laid it out in seventy two plots [all shown on Badcock's plan, FIG. 22] many of which they disposed of by auction in December 1821 and the remainder in June 1822 reserving to themselves about eight acres each, Dudley's eight acres being part of Bates' nursery, and Kimber building his own house on his, and also two lots of about three acres which Kimber sold for £315 to Green, who built his house. Green sold the land to a Mr. Ward of Oxford for £470, who within a few weeks parted with his bargain to two Oxford tradesmen Jubber and Bridgewater for £800, these two put the plots to auction and absolutely sold these three acres of the worst land on the whole estate called Couchey Piece



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for between twelve and thirteen hundred pounds, all this within a year. It now lies waste open and unfenced to the Woodstock Road.'

This land remained unbuilt upon for some sixty years after Badcock wrote this account, it being the piece at the SW. corner of Squitchey Lane and the Woodstock Road.

Badcock's description ends here and he devotes the next forty-nine pages to a list of the inhabitants of all the houses he has described, giving their ages, characters, and employment, stating how many in the various households can read, and if there is a Bible in the house. He concludes with a lengthy and interesting account of the founding, building and consecration of the old church (PL. XVI, B) and the planting of a yew tree in the churchyard by his son and two of his friends. The old church was unfortunately demolished in 1924 and the churchyard lies now derelict and unkempt.



A



B

BANBURY ROAD, SUMMERTOWN, OXFORD, LOOKING SOUTH

A. View in August, 1944, showing site of Diamond Hall (p. 153), behind the lamp-standard.

*Ph. H. Minn.*

B. The same view, 9 June, 1767, from a water-colour by J. Malchair.

PLATE XV



A



B



C

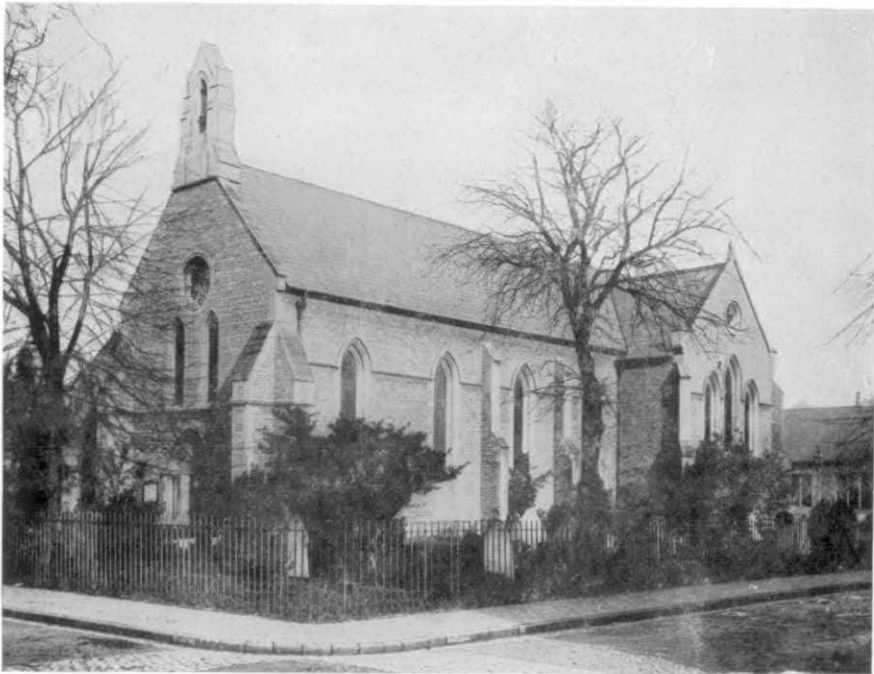
BANBURY ROAD, SUMMERTOWN, OXFORD, EAST SIDE

- A. Nos. 240-254, June, 1929 (site of Organ's Garage) ; built in 1824 (p. 154).  
 B. Nos. 258-262, June, 1929 ; built in 1824 (p. 155).  
 C. Nos. 278-290, February, 1914 (Pharaoh's Row) ; built in 1823 (p. 156).

PLATE XVI



A



B

SUMMERTOWN, OXFORD

A. The Banbury Road looking N., May, 1904, showing Diamond Farm (site of Moreton Road) (p. 157).  
*Ph. H. Minn.*

B. Summertown Church, consecrated in 1831, demolished 1924 (p. 161).

*Ph. unknown.*



PLATE XVII



A



B

WOODSTOCK ROAD, SUMMERTOWN, OXFORD

- A. Nos. 264 and 266, May, 1929 (site of City Motor Company's Garage) ; built in 1823 (p. 159).  
B. Couchy Piece, entrance to Squitchey Lane, May, 1929 (p. 160).

*Phh. H. Minn.*