

MEN AND WOMEN OF BENSON 1750-1800

These are some summaries of articles from the pages of Jackson's Oxford Journal for the second half of the eighteenth-century. They are mere snapshots of the times but help to illustrate the life of Benson inhabitants.

Crime and justice

- 25 March 1758 **John Davis**, charged by **Mr Harwood**, Benson with stealing horse from **James Batten**, Burnham, Bucks, committed to County Gaol.
- 24 April 1762 **James Costard** of Benson, former master, said to have two wives living, sent to Castle (Oxford) for murder of his mother (shot previous evening). Said to have confessed crime to a relation, at the Three Horseshoes.
- 8 October 1765 Person claiming to be servant to a **Mr Williams** took horse from **John Shrubbs**, White Hart, Benson; did not return.
- 31 January 1768 Barn, etc at Roke burnt down, owner **Kemp** of Red Lion, Benson. Supposed same culprit who fired Sandford Hall.
- 30 April 1768 **Rich Pierce**, Benson recently committed to Castle (Oxford) for illegal killing of hares.
- 2 May 1770 **Josiah Saywell** committed to Castle (Oxford), charged with stealing clothing property of **James Pilkins** and Rich Greenaway, Benson.
- 3 March 1773 Assizes. **Justice Nares, Baron Eyre**, Convicted:— **Thos Bonnay**, burgling **Henry Goodwin**'s house at Benson. Transported 7 years.
- 2 March 1774 Assizes. **Justice Nares, Baron Eyre**, Convicted:- **Wm Basset**, stealing goods from farm wagon at Benson. **Wm Hedges**, stealing. Both whipped round Market Place, 5 March.

Lord of the Manor

- 11 June 1776 Benson, Court Baron for the manor of Bensington at the White Hart (**John Shrubbs**'s) for tenants to pay off arrears of quit-rents, in Benson, Warborough, Shillingford, Nuneham, Holcombe, Roke, Berwick, Henley, Nettlebed, Checkendon, and Nuffield. Lord of the Manor, **Sir John Stapleton**; steward **Thos Newell**.

Turnpike and taxes

- 12 August 1769 List of collectors of land and window tax for 1766 still in arrears, ordered to pay Under **Sheriff Clarke**.
Bensington: **Thos. Antrus, Wm Jarvis**.
- 4 Sept 1772 Dorchester turnpike Trustees met at White Hart, Benson: ordered Dorchester gate-keeper to weigh all vehicles on 8 September and charge extra toll on overloaded carriages. Turnpike gate to be set up near the Fox, Bix.
- 26 April 1777 **Thos Newell**, Henley attorney died recently. He had been clerk to several turnpike trusts in the area; meeting held to elect successors 9 May, election at White Hart, Benson, for Dorchester-Bix turnpike; candidates **John Allnatt**, Wallingford and **Thos Cooper**, Henley (Cooper chosen).

Gossip

- 5 March 1755 A basket of food was stolen from **Justice Birch**'s coach on the way to Oxford from Benson.
- 6 Sept 1764 Benson. **John Shrubb**'s brother died of gout. The same day a sick servant of **Col Urmston**'s came from London to **Shrubb**'s Inn (White Hart) and died there. Shortly afterwards a poor man employed by **Shrubb** on harvest work died of consumption. These events gave rise to rumour of infectious outbreak, denied by **Shrubb**.
- 1 July 1768 Thunderstorm, several horses struck dead, some on roads, driver of chaise belonging to White Hart, Benson, temporarily blinded.
- 1 Dec 1764 Race, Benson-London; a farmer's lame mare beat a recently bought horse.
- 26 August 1769 Letter from Benson re recent accident in Oakley Wood; ground gave way and rider fell 7ft into underground cave (thought possibly connected with local tradition of underground passage to Wallingford). Help procured from the Lamb, Gould's Heath.
- 21 January 1775 The celebrated **Miss Betsey Allen** and **Mr Woodley**, both of Benson, married recently.
- 29 July 1778 Cricket match. Benson club will take on any side on Warborough Green.

We may finish by listing a few of the occupations of Bensonians mentioned in Jackson's Oxford Journal. They include:

John Sedgley	Barber/peruke maker;
John Stevens	Baker
Wm Hobbes	Bricklayer
Rich Humphreys	Journeyman, breeches-maker
Peter Powell	Chairmaker
Philip Padbury	Coach and harness-maker
Henry Goodwin	Grocer, tallow chandler, soap boiler, spirits retailer!