

THE BARTONS

IN THE

1920's

Village life in the Bartons of the 1920's would have been familiar to people who had lived here a long time ago. Now, sixty years later, that way of life has gone. This brief account written before the memories too are lost is being published at the time of the exhibition in the village "The Bartons in the 1920's".

We are most grateful to all the people who have helped and who have given information. There are too many to name individually.

In a brief account, however, we have to be selective and there is, alas, not space enough to include all the information we have been given.

The Bartons History Group

11 Enstone Road Middle Barton

October 1986

In 1921 the population of the Bartons was 719. It was a small community and in many ways almost self-supporting. The village nurse helped to bring people into the world and the village undertaker made the coffin and arranged the funeral when they died. Most people worked in the village or on farms and at large houses in the surrounding area. The local blacksmith and harness maker repaired the farm machinery. Corn was ground at the mill, large quantities of bread were baked and there were several shops. Most of the entertainment was in the village, and the life of the community was very important.

Changes, however, were taking place. Developments in transport and education had brought people more into touch with the outside world and responsibility for running the community was being taken by bodies outside the village.

Local affairs had for hundreds of years been managed by the Vestry and by Overseers appointed by the Vestry. In 1894, under the Local Government Act, the functions of the Vestry were taken over by the Parish Council. Steeple Barton had a Parish Council and the smaller Westcote Barton had a Parish Meeting. At the same time the Rural District Council was set up, based in Woodstock. The Bartons were transferred in 1932 to the Chipping Norton Rural District Council and this was replaced in 1974 by the West Oxfordshire District Council.

Overseers, elected by the Parish Council, continued to collect the poor rates until 1925. There were two Overseers, William Constable and Walter Parsons, and an Assistant Overseer, Charles Ayres, when this came to an end in that year with the Rating and Valuation Act. The Board of Guardians of the Poor continued to meet in Woodstock until it was abolished in 1929 and its functions transferred to the County Council. The Workhouse in Woodstock took in the aged and the infirm poor, and the Parish Registers up to the 1920's contain references to burials of people who had died in the Workhouse Infirmary.

The Barton Friendly Society was founded in 1858 to provide an insurance scheme, and until 1909 held annual Club Days each July. With new social insurance measures being introduced, in 1915 the Society became part of the Oxfordshire and United Counties Friendly Society. In the 1920's, however, and until 1934 there was still a local collector, George H. Kirby. In 1921 there were 101 men and 15 women members each contributing 11½ d. a week.

Many changes came to the Bartons in the 1920's as a result of the sale of the Hall estate. The Hall family, of Hall's Brewery in Oxford, owned about 4,000 acres of land in the area. They had bought the former Sesswell's Barton manor house in 1822, rebuilt it, naming it Barton Abbey, and had considerably enlarged the estate.

Alexander William Hall was born in 1838. He was member of Parliament for Oxford from 1874-80 and 1886-92. Because of alleged electioneering malpractice in 1880, he was disqualified and so Oxford was disfranchised between 1880 and 1886. He lived in Barton Lodge from 1867 until he moved into Barton Abbey after his mother's death in 1893. The family supported both Church and Chapel. His wife played the organ in Church and also attended services in the Methodist Chapel where tablets commemorate the work of his sister and brother-in-law, Hilarie and John Rochfort. Alexander William Hall was a JP, Deputy Lieutenant, a member of the County Council, Chairman of the Woodstock Board of Guardians and of many other committees. He provided land and money for the school, made over 100 acres of land available for allotments and was Chairman of the School Managers and the Parish Council. He helped to run a Sunday School and with his wife provided school treats and Christmas parties. Many people remember these activities and remember him riding round the village on his black pony. He played the part of the village squire and was known as Squire Hall. Middle Barton, however, developing as it had, and with people coming here and building their houses on the roadside waste, had a tradition of independence and Nonconformity. It was never ruled by a squire in the same way as the neighbouring villages of Sandford and Rousham.

A.W. Hall died in 1919. His sons remained for another 3 years but between 1922 and 1925 the estate was split up and sold. This marked the end of an era and also a change in the ownership of land. Barton Abbey with land including Home Farm, Church Farm and Whistlow was bought by the Pikes, who remained for 10 years. Sale catalogues of 1922 and 1924 give details of the land and property put up for auction. Barton Lodge was sold to the Dillons. Many other people bought farmland, houses and small plots of land. Owners of the houses that had been built on the roadside waste in North Street and Worton Road were able to buy their back gardens. These had been rented from the Hall estate.

In Westcote Barton, in the mid 19th century, Jenner Marshall had built Westcote Barton Manor House and he owned land and property including Manor Farm, Park Farm and Graftons Farm. His daughter Alice, in 1888/9, provided The Church of England Mission and Temperance Hall, now renamed The Alice Marshall Hall. In the 1920's the Marshall family still owned land and property but were no longer living at the Manor House.

Many postcard photographs were taken in the 1920's. The low postage rate had encouraged the production of the cheap postcard and these were sent to absent members of the family reminding them of home. These photographs help to build up a picture of what the village was like then.

There were many more trees, particularly elms, and more wild flowers. Watercress grew in the brook. There were fewer houses, although some of the houses that have now been made into one were then two or more, particularly in Jacob's Yard and Fox Lane. Four Council houses were built in 1927 in North Street [29/35].

From Monday to Saturday hours of work were long, and children were expected to help with jobs at home or on the land. Sunday was a day of Church and Chapel going, family walks and only essential work. Nearly every family kept a pig and had an allotment. Water was fetched from wells, springs or the brook. One of the springs was in Mill Lane, just north of the Mill, and there were several 'keaching' stones by the brook. The steps to such stones are still there by the bridges in Westcote and Middle Barton where the road goes over the brook. Lighting was by oil lamp or candles and the privy was at the end of the garden. (Electricity came in 1933, mains water in 1938, and main drains by 1952.)

The pace of life was slower then. People travelled by train from Heyford Station and they walked and bicycled long distances. Horses were used and a few people had cars. There was very little traffic and the children used the roads for games - marbles, hopscotch, bowling hoops and spinning tops. The surface of the road was rougher then and, when newly done, was too sharp for the

children to spin their tops. Work on the roads was carried out using steam rollers with stones from local pits, some of the stone still being broken by men at the roadside. The last time this was done was in the 1920's on the bank opposite the Mission Hall. The roads and verges were well kept by lengthmen who took a pride in the tidiness and cleanliness of their stretch of road. Mick Kerrison was heard to complain - very expressively by all accounts - after the cows had been driven along his newly cleaned Worton Road. Other lengthmen at work in the 1920's were Arthur Franklin, George Wilkins and William West.

The mill race, now filled in, provided power, sometimes supplemented by steam, for corn to be ground at the mill. The water was diverted from the brook in the field north of South Street making a waterfall there. The water went under a bridge by the steps at the Dock and then on to the mill. The overflow of water by the mill was used for sheep washing, and sheep were also brought here from Duns Tew to be washed.

CHURCHES. The Vicar of St. Mary's Church Steeple Barton was the Rev. Simon Stephen. He was an Armenian and was named Shimoun Stephan Isko when he was born in Mosul, then in the Turkish Empire. He was a Roman Catholic priest before becoming a Protestant and came to Steeple Barton in 1904 where he was Vicar until he died in 1946, He was a Doctor of

Divinity and an unusual man to find as a parish priest. The Parish Clerk at the beginning of the 1920's was William Luing. He had held the post for 30 years and his father, before him, had been Clerk for over 50 years. Later, the position was held by Walter Parsons and then George Stockford.

Canon William Alexander Carroll was Rector of St. Edward's Church Westcote Barton from 1921 - 1929. The Rectory then was the house, now Westcot Barton Lodge, on the opposite side of the road from the Church. The Parish Clerk was William Brain who had been Clerk for 56 years when he died in 1928.

CHAPELS. There were two Chapels. The Wesleyans had a Chapel in the Worton Road, now converted into a house [2]. James Bassett was a lay preacher and was Superintendent of the Sunday School. The Chapel in the Dock was Primitive Methodist. The preachers included Teddy Matthews, Alfred Reeves and Andrew Gibson, and Teddy Matthews was Sunday School Superintendent. As well as the Sunday Services and Sunday Schools, there were meetings there every day during the week, and open air camp meetings were also held. Kenneth Castle was a member of the band and he remembers playing at these meetings. People and bands came from elsewhere too, and hundreds joined in as they made their way round the village.

DOCTORS. Dr. Jones held surgeries on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays; Dr. Turner

on Wednesdays and Fridays. Ann Hazell looked after the surgery for Dr. Jones in the most easterly of the three houses in North Street which were pulled down to make room for the road into the Firs estate. This house had a covered passage way in which people could wait. In Dr. Turner's surgery, further along the road [53], people had to wait outside. In those days, too, you had to pay to see the doctor. But there are many stories of kindness on the part of the doctors, particularly Dr. Turner, in not sending in a bill. A dentist visited every so often and would drill teeth with a machine driven by a foot pedal. Infectious diseases were rampant and death was more common. People who were children in the 1920's can remember carrying the coffins of friends who had died.

SCHOOL. There were 96 pupils in 1921 and in that year the School was taken over by the Local Education Authority and ceased to be a Church school. Charles Ayres was Headmaster from 1904 to 1933 and his wife taught the younger children. They lived, in the School house and were both involved in many village activities. The school closed for village events, when there were epidemics of illness and also when the brook flooded after heavy rain and the children were unable to get across. In the early twenties children walked to and from Steeple Aston School, the girls for cookery lessons and the boys for woodwork. In 1930 the school here became
a

junior school and the children over 11 years of age were transferred to Steeple Aston Senior School. Transport was provided! Science was not then considered a suitable subject for a junior school and the scales and weights used in such lessons had to be returned to the Local Education Authority.

PARISH COUNCIL. In 1920, A.N. Hall was Chairman after his brother's death. Charles Marsh became Chairman in 1925 and held this position until 1942. The balance in hand in 1926 was £4.15s.4½d.

POLICEMAN. Thomas Russell and then William Franklin held the job of village policeman. Their house in North Street [71] was described as the Police Station.

MISSION HALL. Now the Alice Marshall Hall, it was then a Mission and Temperance Hall, managed by Trustees, and no alcohol was allowed. It was used for meetings and there was a lending library there. Part was used as a reading room where men could play games such as dominoes. Remember, though, that in the 1920's this reading room would be only for the use of the men.

THE BRITISH LEGION had their hut at the back of [69] North Street. It was there until it was moved, at the time of the 1935 Silver Jubilee, to the new playing fields further along the road (where nos. 37/39 are now). The Memorial Hall & Playing Fields in Worton Road were opened in 1948.

ENTERTAINMENT. There were dances, and people made music and sang on many occasions. Ronnie Riach was a great performer. The Flower Shows and the Church and Scout fetes were great events and there are many postcard photographs of these. The Women's Institute Christmas parties became very popular. Barton had its own cinema which was set up in 1924. It was in North Street [106], in a building transported from Kent, and was run by Albert Constable. An engine at the back provided power - though not always reliably. There were Church and Choir outings. But the highlight of the year was the Primitive Methodist Chapel Sunday School outing. For many it was their only opportunity of a day at the seaside. People will still tell you how much they enjoyed these outings. They remember starting at about 5 a.m. to walk to Heyford Station. They remember the train journey, the whole day at the seaside, the journey back and the walk home from the station. Soon, however, they were to be transported by coach.

SPORT. Cricket was played at the Sands, a field belonging to Barton Abbey, bowls in a field by the Westcote Barton Rectory, and football at Sycamore Farm. Matches were played against other villages and we know that the Middle Barton cricket team won the Valentia cup in 1924.

SCOUTS AND GUIDES. The Barton and Worton Scout Group was started by Swynfen Jervis in

1921 and run by him for over 21 years. Helped by Delia Carroll he also ran a Cub pack. A Guide Company was started in 1923/4 with Sybil Emerton as Captain and Mona Kirby as Lieutenant but it was disbanded after only a few years.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE. This was started by Mrs. Pike in 1923. Meetings were held in the afternoon and there were many practical courses.

FARMS. Some of the farm land in Middle and Westcote Barton which had belonged to the Hall family estate was put up for sale, in different lots, in the auctions of 1922 and 1924. Tommy Robinson bought land and the farm buildings at Holliers Barn, Will Irons Snr. bought the Holliers Farm buildings with some land. Fields up the Worton Road were grouped with the house to make Elm Grove Farm which was occupied at the end of the 1920's by Nat Jarvis. Alf Brain bought land and Woodway Cottage. Walter Smith bought land with the house by the School to make Village Farm. Much of the land has since been sold again and some of it used for building.

Church Farm and land in Steeple Barton was farmed by William Goffe. Rupert Brooks farmed at Whistlow and at the beginning of the twenties William Waller was at Leys Farm. William Constable was at Home Farm in Middle Barton, and he also farmed the land belonging to Manor Farm. The Manor Farm house was let separately. Ernest Hawker was at Sycamore

Farm. In Westcote Barton, Manor Farm was farmed by George Reed, and Park Farm by Henry Allen. Archie Reeves and then Howard & Silver were at Graftons. William Smith took over from Joseph Langford at Downhill and Arthur Westover was at Horsehay. Several of the farmers sold milk, Ernest Hawker had a round, others sold milk at the farm door at a cost of 2d. or 3d. a pint or jugful. Farmers employed a lot of labour and still used horses but mechanization was coming. Steam threshing machines were in use and the first tractor was to appear here in 1930.

PUBS. At the beginning of the 1920's the three pubs belonged to Hall's Brewery but by the end they had been sold to Ind Coope. The Carpenters Arms looked much the same as today. The landlord was Tom Baker. The Three Horseshoes, where nos 22/32 North St. are now, was a pub until 1933 and was run by George Hope. Percival and Julia Gooding were at The Fox. Beer was also sold by the Farleys at their shop in Mill Lane [6]. Drunkenness was not uncommon, but people say the beer was stronger in those days.

SHOPS. Thomas Barrett had a butcher's shop (with slaughter house nearby) in North Street, in the same place, as the butcher's shop today, and Charles Eaglestone worked with him there. On the other side of the road [19] was Kirby & Co - groceries one side and household goods on the other - run by Phil Kirby and family. People still talk about the

fizzy drink he made, called monster, which cost 1d a pint. Ruth Kirby remembers working there with her uncle.

"We started at 8 o'clock and worked until 7 at night, 9 o'clock on Saturdays. We used to weigh up all the goods, sugar, lard, cheese etc. and cut up large bars of salt. In addition my cousins and I took it in turns to go and get orders covering a wide area."

Similar memories are shared by Gladys Hudson (then Houghton). She opened the shop at 7 in the morning to get trade from the men going off to work, and she remembers delivering groceries on her bicycle after the shop had closed at 8.30 or 9 pm. This was at Allday's shop in North Street [34], which they took over in 1926 from the Parsons. The Post Office was opposite [21/23] run by the Grimsleys who were also builders. Postage on a card was ½d. and the Post Office opened on Christmas Day. The telephone had been installed by 1928. The Potters had a shop [11/15 Enstone Road]. They took over in 1925 from George Elkins who had a fish shop there. Clara Hawkins had a shop in South Street [44] and the Farleys had their shop in Mill Lane [6]. The Farleys and the Kirbys both acted as collectors of money for hospital insurance. People would bring a few pence each week - in case they had to have hospital treatment.

TRADES. The Grove Nursery was a flourishing garden business in North Street [81/83]. It

had been set up in the 1840's by the Soden family and run by them until it closed in the early 1920's. Head gardener at Abbey Wood was Solomon Stewart, previously head gardener at Barton Abbey. There was a farrier's shop on the corner of Jacob's Yard and North Street [110]. When Frank Gascoigne first started working there with his brother he thought nothing of cycling to and fro each day from Helmdon (the other side of Brackley). The other farrier was Dickie Jones further along North Street [44/46]. Harry Bradshaw was taking over from Thomas Jarvis as harness maker [96]. George H. Kirby, opposite, was still tailoring (in 1928 he would make a suit for £4.2s.). He was also postman. Robert Jarvis and Aubrey West started their newspaper delivery service in 1923 and Robert Jarvis continued with this until 1978.

Mark. Stockford was baking bread at Constable's bakery next door to Home Farm in South Street. He also cooked Sunday dinners there and many people remember the delicious smell that used to waft over the village at Sunday dinner time. Tom Jeffries baked at the Mill where Henry Harris was grinding corn, and lardy and dough cakes were made at both Constable's bakery and at the Mill in Henry Harris's time. Albert Pearce took over the Mill in 1925.

In their workshop opposite The Fox (replaced by houses in 1966), Kenneth Castle took over from his father the business of

wheelwright, carpenter and undertaker. George Baker carried on a similar business, and he had his workshop where the hairdresser is now [2 Woodway Road]. Both of them also did building work. Other builders were Charles Boffin, Percival Grimsley, William Irons and Charles Marsh.

In a hut on the wayside (Woodway estate now) "Zach" Barrett cut hair, mended kettles, did odd jobs and played his concertina. His hut was often used as a meeting place - again, men only and you could hardly see across the hut for smoke.

TRANSPORT. In 1928 the Parish Council asked for tenders to transport rubbish to a disused stonepit. Two tenders were received. One was 3/6 per cart load. The other was 5/6 per ton for a lorry load. This highlights one of the biggest changes of the time. The motor was taking over from the horse. There had been cars earlier - Charles Boffin in his de Dion had taken part in the first London Brighton race. There were also motor cycles. But in the 1920's haulage and coal businesses, with lorries, were started by John and Gordon Mole, Walter Howe and Gilbert Newman. Mildred Prior was using her car to provide a taxi service. Frederick Price had built and was running Hopcrofts Holt garage. Cars and bicycles were mended by Alec Prince and Bert Farley. Next door to them, Robert Jarvis had started up his garage and coach business where the Middle Barton garage is

now. There was great excitement when he ran his first bus. He used this bus, with benches down the sides and green canvas overhead, to take people to London in 1925 to visit the Wembley Exhibition. In the early 1920's he was described as a carrier. So also was Frank Humphries and for a few pence they would both take orders for items to be bought in Oxford or Banbury (on approval). William Humphries, with his horse and cart, was continuing the family business of carrier - to Banbury on Mondays and Thursdays, to Oxford on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Horse and motor coexisted in the 1920's but the lorry, coach and car were taking over. They were giving people more opportunities to go outside the village for work, entertainment and for shopping.

Nowadays we have our cars, consumer goods, and health and education facilities, but we have lost many of the shops and services that used to exist in the village. Perhaps each generation looks back and thinks 'those were the days'. Village life in the 1920's was certainly not easy. Hours of work were long and there was very little money to spare. But many who lived here then do believe that in the self supporting and friendly community of those days people were more content with their life than many are today.

POPULATION FIGURES
By Parish

Year	Pop.	No. of of Houses	Mean Size of Household
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STEEPLE BARTON

1801	393	78	5.0
1871	956	229	4.2
1921	587	174	3.4
1981	1344	477	2.8

1986	1500	Estimated 540	2.8
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WESTCOTE BARTON

1801	184	37	5.0
1871	284	67	4.2
1921	132	37	3.6
1981	160	50	3.2

At the beginning of the 1920's people were still mourning those who had died during the First World War.

Harold Bassett
Frederick Carpenter
Horace Castle
William Clack
Frederick Constable
John Constable
Albert Edward Hawkins
George Henry Hawkins
Ernest Hawkins
William Humphries
William Keen
George Kirby
Frederick Luing
Stephen Marshall
William Parsons
William Proffitt
John Edwin Smith
Charles Stevens
Horace Steward
Felix Stockford
Walter Woodruff