

# Bartons History Group Written Memories Folder

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## A POTTED HISTORY OF THE BARTONS

S.W. Allington

1984

### In the Beginning

Our own place names of Steeple, Westcot and Middle Barton take us back probably three thousand years. The name Barton is of Celtic origin and is derived from two words "bere" meaning "bear" that which the earth produces and "toun" which was a forked fence enclosure. Homesteads in pre-Roman days that were enclosed with a strong fence and farm buildings were called Bartons. There are dozens of such named places in England.

In Domesday, that great survey of the country, which William ordered in 1086 the Bartons came into evidence for the first time. Three entries in the Domesday Book refer to the Bartons. Extracts from these entries are as follows.

There is land for 16 ploughs. There are 2 mills rendering 10 shillings and 9 acres of meadow. It was worth £12 in King Edward's time but is now worth £20.

An estimate of the population of the 3 Bartons at the time of the Conquest was 300.

Although there is no written evidence of the Bartons before the Domesday Book there is much evidence to show that man settled in this area three thousand years ago. Then of course there are the ancient megalithic monuments of huge upright stones such as those found at Rollright which take us back at least 4 thousand years.

The Roman occupation came to the Bartons. Roman horse-shoes dug up when the electricity supply was being installed are now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. Two Roman coins were found in the foundations of Steeple Barton Church. Roman pottery was found by the writer at Sandford St. Martin. This is now in the Asmolean Museum.

It is probable that Saxon churches existed on both sites of the present Norman churches at Steeple and Westcot Barton.

Barton in early Norman days would have presented a very different picture from that which it does today. Great woods covered the country with a considerable amount of common land. Villeins (people who worked for the local lord) had the right of taking firewood - dead wood which they broke off with hooked sticks (but no higher than they could reach, hence the saying "by hook or by crook"). They were also entitled to wood for the building of houses and fences. They also had rights of cutting furze for firing and turves for roofing. These were rights with which the Lord of the Manor could not interfere.

They could, on payment of a small fee to their local Lord, obtain the right to

feed their pigs in the woods on the acorns and beech nuts.

### Christianity

Early conversion to Christianity must have been responsible for the fact that two small hamlets like the Bartons should possess fine churches which date back to early Norman days. Churches in the old days were not built by the offerings of the faithful, nor were appeals made for building funds as is the modern practice. It was obligatory for the Lord of the manor or the chief land owner to build a church for his people. When it was erected tithes (taxes) had to be paid for its maintenance. The Lord of the manor had the right to present what priest he liked to administer the church. It is often asked what early vicars were paid; at the council of Oxford in 1222 it was decided that a stipend of £5 was ample for the parish clergy. The gulf between the poor paid vicar and the bishop cannot be believed. Bishops received an income of over £1000. These figures in terms of today cannot be exactly expressed but multiplied by 200 will give some idea.

The two churches in the Bartons, were well established before many others in the county were built. Though showing the scars of age and alterations they have a quiet dignity in their peaceful settings which is fairly unique. They are veterans compared with the majority of churches roundabout which belong to the 14th century.

Religion was a real and vital part of daily life a thousand years ago. Stone crosses were set up by the road side. One such cross once stood at the cross roads near the Mission Hall now called the Alice Marshall Hall. Only the base has survived and a remnant can be seen in the church yard opposite the porch of the church. Mass was sung daily in both churches and absent parishioners knelt at their work in the field or wood when the Sanctus bell was heard.

### Everyday Life 1200 - 1400

The peasant had Holy Days (which we now call holidays) when he did not work and spent his time after Mass, dancing or wrestling with his neighbours or maybe watching a cock fight. Sometimes he watched a pastoral play by a travelling company.

Like any other village the river played an important part in the development of the Bartons. The River Dorn was not always the small river that it is now. It was a famous trout river back in Norman days but fishing must not be counted among the everyday pursuits of the peasants. All the fish belonged to the Lord of the manor and he was very jealous of his rights as many a poacher found to his cost. In 1274 there was an inquiry into the rights of fishing when it was decided that John de St. John - the then Lord of the Manor of Barton enjoyed the warren (the right of hunting) and the right of fishing the river Dorn.

The river also supported three mills. One at Westcot Barton, one at Middle Barton and one at Steeple Barton.

### Law and Order

It was an obligation of the parish to provide stocks for anyone who misbehaved. The punishment being usually fixed for a Sunday. The stocks were placed at the corner of Fox Lane so that the prisoners could not only feel the scorn and contempt of people going to church but were made an unhappy target for any missiles which had been brought for the occasion.

### Living Conditions

Life in the villages was not as comfortable as in a town. The houses were constructed of wood and plastered with mud on the outside and thatched. Usually there was only one room, sleeping room, workroom and a place where pigs and fowl could wander. The fire on the hearth emitted clouds of smoke which made their way through holes in the thatched roof. Beds were bundles of rushes.

### The Black Death

The expansion of Middle Barton and the shrinking of Steeple Barton came with the Black Death. It wiped out about half the population of Britain. It raged from 1348 to 1351 and caused about 25 million deaths in Europe. Survivors of the plague from the village of Steeple Barton moved further up the valley to Middle Barton to escape the plague and the old village of Steeple Barton was left to fall down. There is little sign of the old Manor of Steeple Barton except traces of the moat and a grassy mound. The present Barton Abbey began with a house being built on the site in 1570 by a merchant called John Dormer. It was considerably enlarged about 1670 by Ralph Sheldon. In 1822 William Hall, a brewer from Oxford enlarged it still more and his grandson planted the fine avenue of Wellingtonias seen there today. In the 14th century there were 60 farms where there is now one.

Living conditions for the inhabitants of the Bartons gradually but slowly changed over the next 500 years with their homes being built of local stone and farming methods gradually improved.

### The Enclosure Act

The enclosure of Westcot Barton and Steeple Barton came by an Act of Parliament passed in the year 1795. This meant that the poor people could no longer cut the furze and other fuel they needed. The act of parliament required that the local trustees, who included the Duke of Marlborough and Francis Brangwin and the Rector of Westcot Barton, should let the land that was enclosed "for the best and most improved rent that can be gotten for the same and lay out the clear rent and profit in the purchasing of coals and other fuel for the use of the poor of Westcot and Middle Barton aforesaid and shall cause the same to be distributed amongst the poor on the 24th day of December yearly for ever in such proportion as the said trustees shall think fit and reasonable".

On the 24th June 1853 a Mr. William Wing who was agent to the Rector convened a meeting

at the parish school room. From the records I have this appears to have been

a lively meeting. The following is taken from the minutes.

"The meeting **was** attended by nearly every labourer in the parish. After the warrant of appointment had been read, William Windus, one of the labourers, desired to know how the Rector and parish officers became trustees of land which was common land. This was explained by reading part of the Enclosure act. A lengthened discussion then took place and several labourers present stated their determination never to pay rent for their allotments nor to quit. The agent warned all present that they would be accounted as trespassers if they continued to occupy after the 29th September 1853. The labourers selected four of themselves to act as a committee with the agent in bringing the business into shape. The meeting which was at one period rather turbulent broke up". It sounds as if the Peasants revolt had started.

The next big step forward in the living conditions of the people came with the installation of electricity in the early 1900's and the water supply in the 1930's. The sewer system was installed in the 1950's. Previous to the sewer system being installed the tiny river Dorn was used by many as means for sewage disposal and the river became very polluted and fish non existent. Luckily the river is now much cleaner and small fish have returned. Kingfishers can once again be seen along the river banks outside the villages.

There was little development in the villages from 1800 - 1900, the population in the one hundred year period only increased from 393 to 651 in Middle Barton, an increase of only 258 and in Westcot Barton the population actually decreased from 184 to 177.

#### Roads

Roads were but pathways across the common fields. In the middle 1800's the Government attempted to improve roads by letting them out to private companies who agreed to keep them in repair for the privilege of taking tolls. For this purpose turnpikes were introduced. One was erected at Barton Gate at the corner of Duns Tew road.

#### Education

Education of the children came about when the local squire Mr. A.W. Hall who lived at Barton Abbey established a parochial school in 1820. It was a small and inadequate affair and was held in a cottage. In 1865 Mr. Hall built the present school at his own expense, on his own land and a body of trustees was appointed to obtain funds for running expenses. The schools did admirable work. It was not until the 1900's that the school was taken over and funded by the Oxfordshire Education Authority.

#### Churches

The two churches were restored in the 1850s. Steeple Barton church was restored in 1850 after it had been gutted by fire. Westcot Barton church was restored in 1855. When the font was removed it was discovered that its base was the headstone of a coffin of the thirteenth century. During the 1939-45 war an American

service man stood looking at Westcot Barton church and said to a churchwarden working in the church yard "Now that's a cute looking church" "Yes" said the churchwarden "and how old do you think it is". "Oh I guess about a hundred years" was the reply. "It was built in 1180", said the warden. The American walked away then turned and said to the warden "Gee that's 760 years".

#### The 1939-45 War

The 1939-45 war made quite an impact on the social structure of the Bartons. Troops evacuated from Dunkirk were billeted in the villages in houses and barns requisitioned by the army. The Alice Marshall Hall was used as a Mess Hall for up to 100 men. The air force at both Enstone and Heyford had quite an effect on local people. The Land Army took over Westcot Barton Manor. The village had many evacuee children and there was a Prisoner-of-War camp at Duns Tew. All these events meant new blood coming into the area as local girls married Service men and some local boys married Land Army girls. The local people were also mobile now and were travelling to Heyford Air Force Base, the Cowley Works and Banbury Aluminium Works to earn their living.

#### Rapid Expansion

Rapid expansion of the village of Middle Barton began with the sewer being installed. Unfortunately, the Bartons have never been a tourist attraction or considered pretty villages. In October 1955 a reporter from the Oxford Mail after visiting Middle Barton wrote "It was quite the ugliest village I have seen in Oxfordshire, indeed it is the only really ugly village I have seen in Oxfordshire". Many may wish to disagree with his remarks. Others may say that the local planning authority must have taken his remarks seriously and have adopted the attitude of -it's too late now. Certainly to many, the development of the village seems to have no pattern regarding materials used or design of buildings.

Since the second world war the village has grown by leaps and bounds but because of economics or the mobility of the people the amenities have decreased.

In the late 1940s the village had the following amenities and no doubt others the writer cannot bring to mind:

- A) Hardware Shop Paints, Pots, Pans etc: Greenslade's
- B) Four General Stores - Hall's, Farley's, Cox's, Wyatt's
- 6) One Post Office - Ruth Kirby
- D) Bakery - Constable's
- E) Fish and Chip Shop - Hall's
- F) Butcher's Shop - Prior's
- G) Cinema - The first in the County with a wide screen
- H) Two Petrol Stations - Jarvis's and Greenslade's
- I) Tailor's Shop - Mr. Kirby
- J) Saddle Maker/Shoe repair Shop - Mr. Bradshaw

- K) Doctors' Surgery
- L) One Local Policeman at Hopcrofts Holt
- M) Blacksmith/Farrier
- N) Medical Aids Centre - Reg. Strickland

In addition to the above, before the National Health Service, the village had its own voluntary Ambulance service. This service was run by a team of eight voluntary drivers and a team of St. John Ambulance nurses. As far as the writer is aware all calls were answered and dealt with. This service covered all the surrounding villages as well and was used two or three times a week. The writer, being one of the few drivers on the telephone in those days seemed to be the one that received most of the night calls. A few of the memories of those days include driving a vehicle without synchromesh gears, no power brakes or steering, no heating or screen defrosting, delivering babies on the way to hospital and having to kill three injured and savage dogs before being able to reach their owner trapped in a crashed car.

Older Bartonians will still remember their parents telling them of their having to take 1 penny (worth less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  p today) to school every week to pay for their education.

They may remember themselves doing such things as paying 2 pence a week to Miss Farley at the shop in case a member of the family had to go to hospital. Taking the Sunday lunch to Constable's bakery for roasting in the bakers oven, cost one penny. The Saturday dances held at the Mission Hall before the word bouncers was even thought of. Known as the sixpenny hop.

The not so old Bartonians may remember, as I do with fondness, the young people's club for 14 -21 year olds and the many trips abroad and festivals won by the club with such things as Drama, Public Speaking, Folk Dancing etc.

Owing to work my wife and I have lived out of Barton for the past 21 years and have only recently returned to a much altered village.

#### Some Points of Interest

1. The average wage for village people in 1938 was £3.00 per week. Rent for a cottage was approx 3/6 (17.5, pence in todays terms) and the cost of buying a good cottage was about £100.
2. Cocksparrrows Hall was a residential home/school for children of the titled and wealthy who were unfortunate to be born the wrong side of the blankets. Many of these children, who were brought up from babies by Miss Shrimpton, could well be now titled people themselves.

3. On December 14th 1650 a servant girl named Anne Green was hanged for murdering her illegitimate child. After being cut down her body was sent to the Anatomy School, Oxford for cutting up. While there she was resuscitated. In 1651 Anne Green came to live in Steeple Barton where she married and had three children. She died in 1659.

4. Westcot Barton was the home village of Mr. W. Cox who was the official war photographer for the War Office and was sent to photograph action in the Boer War, the first time a photographer was used on active service. Considering the camera had not been invented long (in fact it was called a Biograph) Mr. Cox took some remarkable photos which the writer has in his possession (now in BHG archives - ed.).

5. A well known Herbalist called Dr. Pulley used to live in Westcot Barton.

The highlight of the village calendar was the Sunday School outing when nearly everyone in the village went on a trip to the sea side. For most it was their only trip to the sea side during the year and for many it was their only trip out of the village. Miss Ruth Kirby could tell many stories about the Sunday School trips.

S.W. Allington.



**Letter to Annie Bassett from her son Harold Bassett**  
**July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1916**

**Original writer: Harold Bassett**

*(transcribed June/2010 BHG, photocopy of a hand-written letter available from BHG)  
(originals in possession of Mrs. Doris Bricknell)  
(WW1)*

*(punctuation irregular)  
(last page missing, hole in manuscript on page 3, losing 6 lines)*

*(page 1)*

July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 16

Dear Mother,

I have received your letter today and pleased to hear all are well. Yesterday I had nothing to do so wrote a few lines to Harry to pass the time away, though its not often but what there is plenty to do to pass the time away. Did you know that we have got the Day-light saving out here as well as you. I expect this was done because of the ships crossing from here to England. I also had a letter from G. Keen (?) he is much better than he was a short time ago, he said Jarretts told him that they expected me to go and see them while I was home, but its too busy a job for one week though its nice to think there are such strange friends about, and he had got the news from somewhere that I had been home twice from here. "Don't I wish I had". "Not half". Was pleased to hear that Harry has had such a success with his strawberries, he was rather

*(page 2)*

expecting good luck from them when I was home. It is now close on twelve months since we had our last leave from Lord Hill, I well remember the currants and gooseberries being ripe, and G. Keen (?) and I walked from Oxford. Starting from the station at 12.15 pm and arrived home at 4.30 am (?), we have been here 12 months on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of this months. We have just had a draft from Barrington (?) and there is a chap from Gagingwell in it, his name is Beck, cousin to Fred Carpenter and he is (?) to our Company, he will be with Fred. I am glad Ted is getting on well with the journey it's a long voyage for him "it will soon be time for him to start back". You know just lately we have all got a strong opinion of its soon being over, during this last months there has been splendid news from all fronts, we get it from H Quarters of our division, it seems impossible to go on a great while as they are going now "And I hope it is". Sorry to say that Jack Wilkins (?) has been rather poorly again he is always worse in the trenches, so just lately he has been put on a job which will keep him from the trenches, and

*(page 3)*

and when I saw him last he said he was feeling a little better. But if you could see him he looks weak about like his Father. Then at last they have thought of something to commemorate the boys from Barton at the War. Stephen is better than some of them now, does he still respect (?) himself.....

*(6 lines missing)*

started for him a fortnight before I came home. So last week the Officer asked me if (?) would care to be his servant, and of course I told him I did not wish to cause any ill feeling with Carpenter and so on, but he said why he wished me to take on for him, Carpenter was not quite good enough on the job, did not have a good notion of it, and he also said that my other boss always spoke well of me, so I think that had a lot to do with it. I have known him a long time. So I hope to get on alright. We have got a new officer to our Cmpy (*abbr?*) if Fred.....

*(rest of letter missing, after end of page 3)*

end of document

**Letter to Harry Bassett from his brother Harold Bassett**  
**June 30<sup>th</sup> 1916**

**Original writer: Harold Bassett**

*(transcribed June/2010 BHG, photocopy of a hand-written letter available from BHG)  
(originals in possession of Mrs. Doris Bricknell)  
(WW1)*

*(punctuation irregular)*

*(page 1)*

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 16

Dear Harry,

I have just been wondering and thinking, which we often do, when things are a little quiet and I have just had the thought dawn on me that you will soon be taking part towards the safety of both your home, and also ours which you and I and Sisters were (?) well cared for. No doubt you look at it in the same light, as when a few of us gather together here and having a little conversation on the leading subject (War) it generally concludes that we are all here for the good of all our people at home, and sure enough that is the right reason I think, don't you.

Well, I am thinking that it is well that Mother persuaded you not to join when you were so anxious to do so, at the outbreak of the War, and it was only right for all of us young fellows

*(page 2)*

who had no one depending on us to be the most available. I'm sure you will agree with me here. There has (?) been two winters which you have also had the advantage of and now that you are (?) attested as a married man you will be as greatly honoured as we are, which is quite right too, I ought not to say this next thing but really sometimes we wish we had only just got out here. The same as some of our new drafts but still we don't mind when we are settled down a little quiet only. The worst of it is, "we never know when we are going to be livened up". Now Harry I had thought how I would like a talk with you before you went, so this is how I have tried to explain my thoughts, of course I don't suppose it will be any use to you as regards the instructions of your future army days. So now I'll conclude on this subject and start on another.

*(page 3)*

I was sorry to hear that Miss Hall had passed away, and also to think of the alteration which you had made on the floor and then leaving it to someone else although you may have had the chance of taking on for the new people if there are any there, or who has got it I haven't heard yet. They say that Dick Davis's wife is Butler at the Abbey now the Butler has gone. Dick himself was rejected wasn't he. We were pleased to hear that Will. (?) Stewart and Ken Castle had been cleared out, there is only a few more now, Gibson, West, Sollis,.... Doesn't it seem hard on J Constable I feel sorry for him having his leg off. Barton's different now to when there used to be about 60 fellows on the cross roads each night and Sundays too, and then the nights upon nights that you and I have spent at cycle repairing and gardening and so on but I wouldn't mind another turn of it though.

*(page 4)*

Now I'll see about stopping as I have said all only I had nothing to do at the time of writing so have employed myself in writing to you.

Hopefully this will find you all well though I suppose Mary would rather you stay at home.

Closing with the Best of

Luck from your  
Brother

Harold

end of document

**HOW I STARTED THE QUILT**  
**(written by Mrs Checkley 1970s)**

I've always loved sewing, and when I was asked to help make a quilt for our Church funds I willingly said I would. The Church is 800 years old, and needed £4,000 for repairs.

I think altogether I made about 36 plates for the quilt, and, although there were 12 helpers when we started, we finished up with two - a lady churchwarden and myself. However, when it was finished it looked beautiful. It was raffled, and made over £120, Lord Elton drawing out the lucky number. Lady Elton was there too, and asked me about the making of the quilt.

When our Vicar and his wife went back to Australia, she gave me all the odds and ends from the quilt, and, thus encouraged, I thought I would try to make one on my own. Theirs had taken four years. I started mine in early 1967, and finished it in January, 1970.

There is so much preparation before you can really start - cutting the cardboard to the size of the hexagon template, then cutting your material to fit, and tacking, this on to the cardboard. I used to cut out the material and tack one evening, and stitch them together another evening, then I had one plate done. A plate consists of 37 pieces, and as I worked I started to count how many stitches I did in one side of the hexagons; this was 24, so one plate had as many as 2,200 stitches in it. As I've never been able to count all the plates and parts of plates I've done on my own quilt, goodness knows how many thousands of stitches there are all told!

The plates always had to be designed to look effective and colours blended, and, having collected quite a lot of pieces of cotton material, I had a very good choice to begin with.

I had plenty of cardboards already cut out, so I got started straight-away. I made two dozen or more plates, and then concentrated on making a good big plate for the centre, which I surrounded with twelve small

plates. On to these I added the plates I'd got ready.

I worked on this for nearly two years when I moved into a bungalow, and then I had a period (nearly a year) of illness, including shingles, which kept me off work of any sort for ten weeks. When I began to feel better, I really did get down to finishing the quilt, and went into Oxford to get lining, and border in plain material, but had no luck, so then I went all over Banbury, but I had to go a second time to, get a plain green. Then they had only  $5\frac{3}{4}$  yards, which I thought wouldn't be sufficient, but it just did. The lining, I got in Woodstock, in a quaint old-fashioned, double-bay-windowed shop, J. Banbury and Sons, which is now owned by one of the sons. His father used to travel round the villages once a month selling dresses, vests, pants etc., and the villagers used to pay him a few shillings off every time he came.

Having got the border material, I did the only bit of machining - on the one side of it, to keep it straight - then the other side was hand-stitched down and the lining tacked and sewn on, also by hand. I think I counted over 1,500 stitches for halfway round the lining, so that would be over 3,000 stitches altogether. I've never taken count of how many reels of cotton I've bought, but a 1,000-yard reel used to cost 3s. 6d, and now I have to pay 4s. 3d. for 650 yards. Needles used to leave their shape in my thumb, and when I did a lot of sewing the cotton used to cut my fingers, so I had to have a spell off.

Now the quilt is on its way to the Mission, and I hope my daughter will be able to get a nice lot of money for it, and that it will help their work along.

Mr. Griffiths, our Vicar, came from Adelaide, and they had been with us some years. Now he has retired and gone back to Adelaide, but I should dearly love them to be able to see a photograph of the quilt, as Mrs. Griffiths was the one to start the one we did for our own Church.

*(in handwriting, later) ---*

My daughter sent a photo to Mrs Griffith and received a donation to the fund. They raffled the quilt and made 198 dollars.

## MEMORIES OF MIDDLE BARTON

(written by Val Gardner)

This is a very treasured spot in God's great Universe,  
And so I'll trace my memories back and put them down in verse.

"Tis very many years ago since I came here to dwell,  
And many will show interest in what I have to tell.

The first thing here that struck me was the beauty all around,  
And the friendliness and kindness that very soon I found.

It was in the early thirties that here I first set foot.  
So of the things that happened then, let's try and have a look.

Many long decades have passed since Barton first was born,  
But what a lovely place to choose beside the River Dorne,

Now, let's get on with memories of thirty years ago,  
For there's many things I'm sure the young folks ought to know.

The working day was rather long and leisure hours, were few.  
But no one ever heard it said "I don't know what to do".

We had no television or brilliant electric light,  
But every one was happy, from 'morn to still of night,

I treasure very dearly those days of long ago,  
When at the end of every day we had something to show.

It may have been a sweated brow, or blisters on our hands,  
For nearly every family was employed upon the land.

Our homes were very humble, but happiness excelled  
For almost every parent in high esteem was held.

'Six days shalt thou labour' which is one of God's commands  
Was strictly held in reverence by saints who now have gone.

Although I could insert the names, sweet memories to renew,  
I'll leave each one to ponder the things they used to do.

Many things which now have gone were lovely in themselves:  
The common pump outside the door, the purifying wells.

2.

The blacksmith busy at his forge, with fire so warm and bright,  
To watch him shoe the horses was a very lovely sight.

Our little church is still unspoiled and very richly blessed  
With its very pretty churchyard where many loved ones rest.

We also have our Chapel, and we are pleased to say  
Its stood for more than a hundred years and still its used today.

We had our family baker who made and baked our bread,  
But only just a memory now of whom much could be said.

We used to love the cottage loaf, so crusty and so sweet.  
I wish we had a bakehouse now our appetites to greet.

We even had our tailor whom many of you knew  
And what a pleasure to recall the lovely work he used to do.

A reminder of our milk supply I'm sure will do no harm.  
It never came in from the town, we got it from the farm.

I wish we could compare it with what they bring us now.  
It really makes you wonder if they get it from a cow!

And what about the saddler who sat for hours on end  
Making horses harness to which there seemed no end.

For there were very many horses and what a gallant band.  
For they were all the farmer had to cultivate his land.

And yet with all the bustle we see around today,  
The horse proved just as capable whatever people say.

I'm sure you will be very pleased that we have with us still  
That building of sweet memories, the school upon the hill.

It may have since been modernised but still the old part lives.  
And thinking back to childhood days what pleasure still it gives.

And then we have our Abbey, a very stately home.  
Where every one is welcome its lovely grounds to roam.



3.

And so its very pleasing that we can truly say  
The welcome that existed then is still the same today.

And now, with your permission, I'd like to try and prove  
That even thirty years ago we weren't stuck in a groove.

We had a real good cricket team who played down on the sands,  
And many times I saw the ball knocked clean into the stand.

Oh yes, we had our grandstand and this is no mean joke  
For many lovely, hours I spent beneath that lovely oak.

And this I'm pleased to tell you and you'll be pleased to know,  
Our grandstand still remains today its beauty still to show.

We also had a village band and what a lovely treat  
To sit outside your cottage door its soft sweet notes to greet.

Now one thing more I must recall of which I was so proud.  
It was the unit of Saint John's and what a lovely crowd.

Their love and kind devotion I'm sure we did adore,  
It really makes us very sad they're not here any more.

Now if these few sweet memories have really brought you joy  
And that's the only reason that really made me try.

There's surely only one thing left before I close this verse  
To give our humble thanks to God for this His Universe.

(in handwriting, later) ---

With compliments and best wishes from V. Gardner.

Letter: E.G.Hawkins to A.J.Hawkins

Occassion: Marriage of A.J.Hawkins to Mary Van der Velde

May 16, 1920  
Sunday Night  
Oxfordshire, England  
Dear Jack and Mary,

Barton Lodge,  
Steeple Aston,

Many hearty congratulations from Emmie and myself on the event of your marriage, news of which reached us this morning. We wish you all Joy and Happiness in your New Life and Hope please God you may be spared to enjoy it fully. I should like to pay you a call and have a chat. We were not at all surprised to hear the news, you see Dut and Gilbert set the ball rolling now you (John) are the last of the family. So you are got on the building again. I hope it will be a good job. Fred says he is most probably staying with Charlie. He told me Sadie was going home. No doubt he will feel dull. Gilbert came up with Dut from Portsmouth last Sat. Week. After he had been home for a fortnight and then Dut went back with him for a fortnight. He is at Rosyth now in Scotland. I went as far as Bletchington with him last Sunday week and went over to Weston stayed the night. Met Alf there to say Au Revoir to him for Emmie and myself and today he and Lottie are on the Atlantic bound for Canada. I don't think he wanted to go it was Lottie. But we hope they will get on O.K. May's husband has a farm at \_\_\_\_\_. Hulbert Gregory sailed on Tuesday for Canada. He didn't think he'd get a job here but drink is his boss and he is better in Canada where its prohibition. I felt very sorry for Mrs. Gregory, he did very little for her when he was at home. I have done most of her garden. Harry is married (Married Hulbert's girl) did I tell you a Scotch lass and they are settled in a home at Winnipeg. Did the white-washing and papering etc. and they are very comfortable. I am glad to hear you are both so happy in each others love. Say Mary I have no fear but what Jack will be an ideal husband, Mary I only know from (Print) but I think by Jack's letters she is very highly appreciated by him, and is the one he would have. I hope to see you both some day in the old land. Well its not so cold here or so long winters. We have a very late spring this time. I am like the Cows Tail (all Behind). Have had such a wet April. I think Dut has been writing to you so I shall enclose this. Did she tell you Gilbert and her have bought their lot. It was to be sold so they had it to save being pushed out. Houses are a problem everywhere. There's none to be got, Poor old John Soden is dead. Guess John you'd like to take Mary down the Green Lane and listen to the Nightingales there's one at Maiden Bower. Emmie and I went to hear it. We went over to Duns Tew last Sunday to see Aunt Lizzie. It was just 12 months since uncle Tommy died. She is very well but rather lonely and was feeling very sad that day. They gave me Tommy's Watch as a Keepsake. I should think Aunt must be 75 or 76. We walked back by Cotton's and round by Springs and through the Churchyard to see Walters mound. I went down Friday and trimmed it up also Grampy's and Grannies.' They are trying to

*→ likely buried in Oxford.*

pull the church up again. No one used to go. We had Mr. Brownjohn to dinner with us twice lately. I think he likes to come and I just do like a chat with him. He can tell you history and all about the stealing the land from the Poor. I also had a walk one Sunday to Shipton-on-Cherwell to see Jack Johnson. I think he has gone on for Frank Grey. He bought Shipton Manor (Sir Walter Gray's son). Mother and Dad are fairly well. Dad does a good bit in the garden for me. We killed one pig last week and hope to kill the other this week. I want to sell it out if possible to make the Best of it as they didn't do as they ought to have done. Dad has grubbed some of the taters. I have a nice piece of wheat at Lulu. If the Birds don't eat it. I like Jack, likes farming only its a bit too hard for me. I get my heart bad if I work at heavy work, but we must be thankful for all our Mercies. So far we have had a home and food and thats a lot. I guess Jack you would see a great change in Gilbert. He is a fine chap a good husband son and brother. We like to get him here. I still have one brother to help me on a bit.

Well now I must say goodnight with every good wish from us both and love.

I am  
Your loving Brother  
Ted,  
E.G.Hawkins

P.S. Did you get a letter from Emmie she sent some time back.

#### Comments

1. Uncle Ted talks about Walter (his brother) and Grampy and Grannie being buried in the same cemetery although the letter doesn't make clear which churchyard. Would they have been Hawkins' or Skuce grandparents? According to family tree provided by Uncle Ted to my father in 1942, Walter is buried in Steeple Barton so we can assume that Uncle Ted's grand-parents are also interred in the same place. The only question remaining is which grandparents?

The Bert Gregory, referred to in the letter as emmigrating to Canada did settle in Winnipeg and he and his wife were at our wedding as guests in Winnipeg in 1946. A daughter and son (Dorothy and Bill) are still living in Winnipeg to the best of my knowledge at this date.

*Additional hand written comment (not by author) on page 1:*

Who were Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Tommy?

North Street [No 34] ALLDAYS

In 1926 Harry Allday took over the shop. His niece Gladys Houghton helped him and ran the shop after he died. It was ALLDAYS from 1926 to 1938.

*(Two versions of Mrs. Hudsons stories exist, perhaps recorded by different people)*

## **THOSE WERE THE DAYS. Barton 1926 to 1938**

### **Note by Mrs. Gladys Hudson 1984**

"May I recall a few of the characters during my stay in Barton. Harry Allday bought the village stores 'At Top of Dock'. He was an uncle, I also was Jack of all trades.

One customer amused me, dear old Nanny Smith - her first order a quarter of an ounce of snuff, and while we were getting her groceries, she sat down and sniff, sniff, she was enjoying it. I think next of Dicky Jones the Blacksmith. Then of Mr. Humphries, the Carrier, into Banbury every Thursday for any orders we could give him. What a memory, he just looked at our's and said "I shall remember that" and sure enough he did and never once made a mistake. His means of transport was horse and cart.

Then the baker, Mark Stockford. I had a great admiration for him, he never left the shop until we were in fits of laughter over village life and tales of bygone days. Whether he told us all in truth we never knew. He cooked our Sunday joints, roast beef, roast spuds and yorkshire pud for a few pence. It was great fun to see our's off to the Bakehouse, and he knew how to cook it properly.

This must be the last character I well remember, Harry Goulden. He dug a hole in the garden once a week, for the 'you know what'. My uncle gave him half an ounce of twist (4d) each week.

I could go on and on but must just say this, it was the custom at Christmas to give the best only customers a gift of a quarter of tea or two pounds of sugar. What a job if ever we forgot someone, we were in trouble.

Shop hours then 7 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., 9 p.m. Saturdays. Then deliver groceries on my cycle after these hours. Did I say "those were the days"??

## **Those were the days. Barton 1926 to 1938.**

### **Note by Mrs. Gladys Hudson 1984**

May I recall a few of the characters during my stay in Barton. Harry Allday bought the village stores 'At Top of Dock'. He was an uncle, I also was Jack of all trades.

One customer amused me. Dear old Nanny Smith - her first order a quarter of an ounce of snuff, and while we were getting her groceries, she sat down and sniff, sniff, she was enjoying it. She had a lovely skin which shone like a mirror. I asked what soap she used, "ah missus only sunlight".

I think next of Dicky Jones the Blacksmith. He came in the shop twice a week for half an ounce of thick twist, at 8d an ounce he was a good customer??

I think now of Mr. Humphries, the Carrier, into Banbury every Thursday for any orders we could give him. What a memory, he just looked at our's and said "I shall remember that" and sure enough he did and never once made a mistake. He used to charge 3d to 6d the lot, his means of

transport was horse and cart.

The Baker, Mark Stockford. I had a great admiration for him, he never left the shop until we were in fits of laughter over village life and tales of bygone days. Whether he told us all in truth we never knew. He cooked our Sunday joints, Roast Beef, Roast Spuds and Yorkshire Pud for 6d. It was great fun to see our's off to the Bakehouse, and he knew how to cook it properly.

This must be the last character I well remember, Harry Goulden. He dug a hole in the garden once a week, for the 'you know what'. My uncle gave him half an ounce of twist (4d) each week. Oh dear then he asked for a rise and so it got up to three quarters of an ounce (6d). Harry later said "I can't keep working for this, you don't give much away do you, Mr. Allday". Dear old Harry, pity he could not have joined the Union.

I could go on and on but must just say this, it was the custom at Christmas to give the Best only customers a Gift of a quarter of tea or two pounds of sugar. What a job if ever we forgot someone, we were in trouble, therefore we had to keep a close watch on this.

Shop hours then 7 a.m. to 8.30 p.m.. 9 p.m. Saturdays. Then deliver groceries on my cycle after these hours. Did I say "those were the days"??

Five little Shirleys came early one morning, spent a halfpenny, then turned and went home. This happened in the middle of cleaning the range.

## Memories

I've been asked to write down things I remember about my life, I was born on Feb'y 10<sup>th</sup> 1911 in the House which is still my Home it is now known as 67 North St Middle Barton Chipping Norton Oxon OX7 7BH. I have seen many changes in Village life, my Father was the youngest Son of Jeremiah Kirby & his wife Annie (Nez Hollis) I believe there were ~~the~~ children sad to say I never knew these Grandparents but I remember some of the Uncles & Aunts & various Cousins, how did my Father meet Mother, well Father was being taught his Father's Trade by Grandfather Jeremiah so he was sent to a Village the other side of Brackley named Helmdon to continue his apprenticeship with a Tailor Brown who was a master Tailor I should have said earlier Grandfather Jeremiah had unfortunately met with a fatal accident on the main Oxford to Banbury road when he was thrown out of a <sup>youngest</sup> Pony & Trap.

Mother was the <sup>youngest</sup> Daughter of John & Elizabeth Watson whom I do remember, They had quite a large family there was Uncle's Fred, Mark, Luke Frank, a son who had died quite young Aunt's Em. Bessie & Mother. 8 in all Mother had spent her early life working for her Brother Luke who had lost his wife when their Daughter Mary was born caring for this infant & helping in the Bakehouse so Mother was always a good cook. This Uncle later remarried a Auntie Lily there were two Sons of this marriage Tom & Phil later Luke became a Farmer, also so this was how Mum & Dad met they married in April 1906 & came to live in Middle Barton where as I have already said I was born later Mother had a Son, <sup>George</sup> ~~he~~ was born



July 5<sup>th</sup> 1915 By this time Dad was in the Army the 1914-18 War he was sent to Ireland & was in the Royal Engineers. After the War Mother had Twins a Boy who was called Henry & a Girl Ethel

They were born in July 1920 but being born very prematurely they only lived a few days but I can remember very clearly sitting on the mat in Mother's Bedroom & being allowed to hold this tiny baby boy alas there were none of present-day facilities for premature babies. My Grandma Watson came to stay with us to look after George & me, alas she fell down while here & fractured her hip no modern treatment in those days so she had a lump for the rest of her life but she did recover & went back home. She came back to live with us for the last 6 years of her life, By this time her memory had failed I suppose today it would be called Alzheimer's Disease. My Grandpa couldn't read & she would read bits of news from the paper over & over again Mother used to get quite exasperated but George & I used to laugh. But Grandma was a great character & I imagine kept them all in order. But her children were a credit to her. Mark was a Carpenter Luke & Frank Farmers. Uncle Fred had gone to Yorkshire I don't know what work he did. Aunt Em to London Aunt Bessie married a Arthur Dawsey who later became a manager in an Insurance Company they had 2 children a Daughter & Son, The Daughter like me is still single. The Son married but lost his first wife but is now happily married to a widow whom he met after moving to the north to be near his only daughter of the first marriage Jenny by name.

## School Days

I started school between the ages of 4-5 at our village <sup>School</sup> which I am happy to say still is thriving today. It was built from funds given by the village Squire & his lady. They were members of the Hall family who incidentally owned Hall's Oxford Brewery. The Squire's wife was a member of the Rockford family who I think came from Ireland. We had a school master & mistress Mr & Mrs Ayres & various Pupil Teachers. Discipline was very strict, but after a stormy start I grew to like school when we <sup>were</sup> getting up to the age of eleven girls went to Steeple Aston to learn Cookery & Boys Woodwork. Steeple Aston Schools had a good Patron Dr Radcliffe some connection I believe with the Old Oxford Radcliffe Hospital. We used to walk in those days & were very proud to bring home a few hard Buns at the Boys a small wooden object. Later we all went to Steeple at <sup>age</sup> 11 to a new kind of Secondary School which was a converted Army Hut & classrooms Junior & Senior. We had a Headmaster Mr Watts who wore his cap & gown on special occasions & a Miss Hughes. I liked <sup>Steeple</sup> school & did quite well not boasting I was never good at spelling so excuse all the mistakes. How did we get there first by Pony & Trap or Wagonette we had to get out & walk up hills & we loved to dawdle along you had to mind where you sat because the owner's chickens had roosted in the trap the night before. At Steeple we had gardening lessons once a week. The gardener came from Bicester, sometimes we got



taken round some Gardens at the Big Houses of which there were a number in Steeple Aston. Sometimes we would be given an apple each & it was there I first saw Gorge-<sup>ous</sup> Flowers growing in the Greenhouses <sup>Orchids & ~~Chrysanthemums~~</sup>

By now we were travelling by Bus a Peculiar thing like a BOX on wheels Driven by a Mr Franks it made an awful difficulty getting up Hills & sometimes we had to get out & walk. We went to Steeple Aston Church every Friday morning & also had various Concerts in what was known as the Tech another school in Steeple Aston. I can just remember going from our Barton School to Steeple Barton Church to attend the Funeral of Squire Hall. The Stones erected in the Hall & Rochford Family memory are still in parts of the Church yard of St Mary's at Steeple Barton. I should have said earlier Middle Barton is only our Postal address.

We are in Steeple Barton Parish & the other end is Wescoe Barton Parish which has its own Church on the left-hand side of the Road. In those days both Churches had their own Vicar. The one for most of my school days at Steeple Barton Church was the Rev Simon Stephen an Armenian who had come to England. We didn't see much of him at school but he used to come round visiting & Dad & him were always arguing. He was anxious Dad should rejoin the Anglican Church from which he strayed when he met Mother & joined the Baptist chapel but when they returned to Barton they both joined The Primitive Methodist later the Methodists as we are known to day. Later I will write about my Chapel life.

## After School Life

I left school between the age of 14-15 & so started work for my Uncle & Aunt who kept a village shop which was a bit further up North St - alas now closed

Uncle Phil & Aunt Mariane had two daughters Winnie & Mona & a Son George who had started an Apprenticeship in Birmingham with a large Firm of Retailers Preedy's who owned the Barton Shop & many more around A.P.s. This George put his age up to join the Army in the 1914-18 War & was killed within a short time & like so many more was listed as missing believed killed. Uncle had previously worked in the G.W.R workshops at Swindon but due to a diseased leg which he had to have amputated this meant his wife was left to bring up two daughters & support the family, so they took a small store at Filkins & later the shop at Barton became vacant. It had been run by members of the living family of which there were two very old ladies I can just remember Aunt's Lydia & Susan who lived in rooms over the shop. My oldest Cousin Mona is still alive having reached the age of 90 this year 1995 Winnie died some years ago.

also had  
off Green  
week

So this was my shop life I was treated as one of the family being given dinner & Tea everyday there was not much money around but Aunt took me on many little outings & bought me clothes from time to time. Shop life was very different we spent Monday weighing up sugar & other ~~small~~ things. I remember an old lady who used to come for a tin of snuff & men would come for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Pkt of Woodbine's

The hours were long 8 A.M. - 8 P.M. most days & Nine P.M. Sat - A James Bassett used to deliver goods for a larger district around the surrounding villages. Delivery was by Horse & Cart - I remember we 3 girls used to go out to collect the orders around local villages on our Bikes often coming back soaked with the rain, while working



as I said Aunt used to take us out I remember one trip to London when we went on an open top Bus to see the sights, we also saw Westminster Abbey & the Tomb to the Unknown Soldier. As more & more motor vehicles came about Cousins both had driving lessons & Uncle & Aunt bought a car first a second hand one then a little Austin 7 which Winnie got us stuck up against a gatepost at the Kiddington Level Crossing fortunately no trains wanting to cross & many willing hands to pull us back onto the road, but Win lost her nerve & never drove again, but Mona continued for many years Mona married in 1939 an Engineer Electrician who was working at the Upper Heyford Base a large R.A.F Aerodrome later taken over by the U.S.A

So Aunt & Uncle decided to retire as Mona had gone to live in Wales. They had a Bungalow built in the field next to the shop owned also <sup>that is the field by</sup> P. Needy's (Wayside) by name the whole of that field is now developed into houses & Bungalows. A Mr Cox took over the shop. He had been a manager in a London Store & life changed very much he had a wife Son & Daughter & we all had to work very hard I had to do all sorts of things I'd never done in Aunt's time such as clean the shop floor etc But in 1936 my Father was given the option to take over the Post Office, so it moved to our House (67) & remained there until I retired in 1981

## Post Office

As I said Dad had the option of taking over as Sub Postmaster & I left the shop to run it for him this was a big change for me, I think I was in my early 30 then. Dad died in March 1951 & I became Sub Postmistress until I retired in 1982. The hours were very long, <sup>when I started</sup> the morning mail arrived at 5.30 & the Postmen came on Duty soon after when I first started in 1936 mail came by train to Heyford Station & the Steeple Aston Postmen brought it to Barton on a Bicycle but later on it came by Van. I remember I used to set my alarm clock for 4.30 A.M. but was generally awake later when it came by Van it was arriving between 5-6 A.M. the P.O. opened at 8 A.M. later 9.0 A.M. Seven days a week. We had two Postmen who were local a Mr Clack who was staff & Dad who was auxiliary later there was a 3rd person. We covered the whole of the Bartons, Sandford St Martin, Ledwell & the Wottons Over & Netter. Telegrams were delivered on Bicycles as well & we covered for various Offices around on their closing Days. I remember going many miles on my Bike to all sorts of isolated Farms etc. There was even <sup>in</sup> collections on Sunday & we had to open from 4-10.30 for sending telegrams, no holidays in those early days unless you could find a substitute & pay them out of the very small wages one got. Still by the time I retired things & times had changed somewhat. We managed to change closing day to Sat at midday & no longer Sunday opening except for very special items needing despatch. During my service prices gradually increased. Postage especially. Telegrams became less & less as more folk had their own Phones & no longer did we need someone to deliver them. Shortly before I retired I had a big surprise just before the Christmas when I had a letter from Buckingham Palace saying



I was to receive recognition in the New years honours list, this notice duly arrived saying I was to be awarded a BEM this really frightened me. When it was made Public I had many messages of Congratulation from many folk. It was duly presented in April 1982 at our local Village Social club by The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire Sir Ashley Ponsonby. The Village put on a marvellous Party I was escorted by The Chairman of the Parish Council in a special Rolls Royce the short distance from the P.O to the Hall where we walked up a Red Carpet into the Hall where many Friends & distinguished folk were gathered including the Chairman of the P.O district & the Head Postmaster from Oxford. I was also given many lovely presents which I still treasure, The Villagers gave me a Carriage Clock & a cheque as well as the Party & a Album Commemorating the event, so ended my P.O career but with many happy memories. The year following I had an invitation to one of Royal Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace I was taken there by a Mrs Hayles wife of Canon Hayles the St Aston Vicar, Her Cook who had previously been School Cook at St Aston for many years had received the BEM the year before, Mrs Hayles had a Son who was a Secretary in the House of Lords & gave us lunch at their Canteen which had just reopened after the tragic Bomb that killed Sir Aerey Neave when he got into his car after lunch we were given a trip through Westminster Hall where many fine Portraits are displayed of important heads of State & later we sat up in the Balcony to hear their Lordships debating some important issue, until it was time to go to the Palace, The Cars are allowed to put you down at the Porch & you are escorted up the steps & through into the gardens you line up in long rows & The Queen & The Duke come out & walk up or Down & if you are very important you might be presented, we were not but everyone is given Tea & Sandwiches & ladies have to wear Hats & Gentlemen Dark Suits when it's time to leave you wait in the very elegant

Dark suits, when its time to leave you wait in the very elegant

Hallway with very smart chairs Vera the Cook I was with had to sit in one of the chairs as she felt the Queen might have sat in it / pure guess work I would say. Then you wait until your car comes to pick you up. We felt quite important as two of the very smart Officers call out the names, such as The hotel Mayor & his lady of some important Town. Until finally our turn came when they said Miss Pabel & Miss Kirby for Mrs Hayler. Altogether a very memorable Day. I have worn the medal on a few Village occasions to show I appreciated the honour but I very much enjoyed my P.O life after retiring I still got roped in to various Village activities I was Sec & Treasurer of the Mission Hall now known as The Alice Marshall Hall. It is on the left hand corner at the cross roads in North St a very dangerous place a mirror has been put for cars coming from South St & there is another in a Tree for cars coming along South but both North & South St are very congested with parked cars so you need to be a very careful driver.

My life in the Methodist Chapel  
As I said earlier my parents joined the  
Methodist Chapel after they were married  
and I started Sunday school at the age  
of 3 we had a Supt - a Mr Matthews &  
his wife a number of different Teachers  
mostly middle aged but many village  
children we had a morning session  
an afternoon one at 1-30 - 2-30 & then  
as we grew older we were expected to  
stay to afternoon service we had special  
days Anniversaries & special Teas for  
different events we all became keen singers  
& used to learn special Anthems etc  
to sing. There were camp meetings when  
we followed the Band round the village  
& sang Hymns at different stopping  
places, When Dad became Supt we  
used to collect money to take us on  
Summer Outings & also to have a  
Christmas Party, we also had cards to  
save our odd pence & the occasional 6d.  
to give us some spending money when we  
went on trips. I think the earliest trip I can  
remember was going to Woodstock in a Farm  
Wagon drawn by two lovely horses  
later when cars & bus travel became  
more widely used we went further to  
the Seaside I remember going to the  
following places Weston, <sup>Eastbourne</sup> Suezal mare  
Brighton, Bognor, Southsea, Weymouth  
Abingdon on a Boat Trip. Some trips  
we went to Oxford Station & then by  
train These were organised by various.



Firms mainly the Braves & we had one special Coach They were great Days & many happy snaps were taken I still have my Sunday School Album & different Photos of events.

Lately some of our younger members have organised events to raise Funds such as Coffee mornings, evening Suppers, Garden Parties & garden fetes. Altogether they have raised a lot of money which has enabled us to have a nice modern building at least on the inside as we now have Central Heating, double glazing & carpet & chairs instead of hard Pews, but alas very much smaller congregation but I am very grateful to those kind folk who still take me to service & so faithfully Fly the Flag, we now only have one Sunday Service 2.30 in the afternoon & 10 o'clock on the last Sunday of the month, we are now reduced to 3 small girls sometimes 4 or five but no boys at present. We also have fellowship meetings at a friend's house & a ladies meeting once a fortnight at Dashwood House.



Pastor Willis, my first memory was when he was the officiating minister at David & Cynthia's wedding in our Methodist Chapel in 1989.

But I write this on behalf of our ladies who meet in the day room of Deethwood House, on a Wednesday fortnightly, sadly these days our numbers are depleted now, we consist of members from our own Methodist congregation some Anglican friends & anyone is welcome.

We try to find various speakers among them. Pastor Willis has joined us many times & we have always welcomed him & the helpful messages he has brought & shared with us, also his kindness in giving transport to some of us & now we have to say farewell to him & Mrs Willis & we would wish them both peace & happiness as they go to retire in a New life & ask that God will richly Bless them.

On behalf of all

Ruth Kelly Middle Barton  
Methodist Church

## MEMORIES

1920s - 1930s

by MISS RUTH KIRBY

"Many of my memories are of The Methodist Chapel which in those days was Primitive Methodist. Years spent in Sunday School when old Mr. Matthews was Superintendent, and later my father and later still Mr. Castle whom I used to help, years spent playing the organ. Sunday was a busy day then. Prayer Meeting at 7. Sunday School 10.30. Dash off to play at the Wesleyan Chapel at 11. Sunday School 1.30 followed by Service 2.30 and again at 6. We did lots of singing in those days. And in the week there was Fellowship Monday night, Christian Endeavour Wednesday, Women's Meeting Thursday, Prayer Meeting Friday night. Lots of special events. Tea Meetings, Sunday School Outings. All this seemed to change when the war came."

North Street [Nos 17/19] KIRBY & CO

It was KIRBY & CO from 1908 until 1933, groceries one side of the shop and household goods the other.

**Miss 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 on bicycles. We travelled round Sandford, Ledwell and the Wortons one week and Gagingwell, Radford and Kiddington the next. We also covered the village, Barton Abbey and the Lodge. The goods were delivered first by horse and cart and later by van."

In the late 1920s William Humphries, with his horse and cart, was still continuing the family business of carrier.

At the same time Robert Jarvis was setting up his business with motor vehicles.

His first vehicle was open and was used to carry all manner of different things. When people were travelling in it benches were put in for them to sit on. By today's standards we would think the bus very uncomfortable, but the excitement then and the pleasure of a ride in the first bus was tremendous.

Motor transport was making a great difference to village life by giving people more opportunities to go outside the village for work, entertainment and shopping.

## KIRBY, RUTH

Bartons Village Project

Working in a shop, c1920s

18 March 1991

Q Could you tell us when, you started working in the shop?

A It was at the age of 14.

Q What year was that?

A Let, me see now ... I left school in the summer term, so it must have been about 1925.

Q Had you worked in there before you left school properly?

A No, no, not to say work there. I often went up there because it was my uncle and aunt that kept the shop there, see, but I didn't start working until there until I left school.

Q What were your uncle and aunt called?

A They were Kirbys because he was my father's brother. His name was Felix but we always called him Uncle Phil and she was Aunt Marianne and the cousins name, one was Winnie and the other was Mona.

Q How many of them worked in the shop with you?

A We all worked in the shop.

Q It was a real family shop?

A Yes. They had a system whereby one week Aunt was in the house and did the cooking and then one or other of the daughters did the cooking the next two weeks.

Q So what time did your day start?

A The shop opened at eight, you see in those days because of course they didn't have anything like Mr Webb does now, none of those things coming along beforehand. But you worked until eight o'clock in the evening and nine o'clock on Saturdays.

Q Why was it an hour later on Saturdays?

A I don't know. Well I think most people paid on a Saturday. I daresay they got paid on a Friday, paid up their bills ... I know, well it was very different in those days to what shops are now. Everything was weighed up - we weighed everything up, you see. The sugar came in great big sacks, sacks for sugar, same with soda, all that kind of stuff and you weighed it up into pounds as they were in those days, or half pounds and the same with salt, salt came in great big bars as long as that table nearly and you sawed it up into little, you know blocks like bricks.

Q Was there anything else that came like that, that you had to cut up or weigh yourself?

A Everything was weighed up, all fats, like lard, cheese, butter. We did get some butter that was ready done in packs but in those days lots of the farms used to make butter and sell to the shops.

Q Did much of your produce come locally?

A Well, no, I think they got most of their supplies from Oxford. In those days there was a firm in Oxford, Grimbly and Hughes, they were a big grocers in Cornmarket there and they used to get supplies from them and Twinings, there was Twinings in Oxford, all the different places like that where you bought tea and your sack of sugar, whatever.

Q Did they deliver to you in the shop?

A Yes, I think they did, yes I'm pretty sure Grimbly and Hughes did because I remember they had a big new lorry, one of the first sort of vans that came round.

Q How often would they deliver?

A Oh, about once a fortnight. And all the bacon and everything like that came as a side of bacon, it all had to be cut up into rashers and I, well later on after my uncle retired I remember ... there was a Mr Cox came from London, he'd been in a London shop and we did have a bacon machine then. You know, you turned it with a handle and it cut the rashers up. A big advance. In fact I nearly cut my little finger off, I think it was that one, I can't really be sure now, I cut it in the bacon machine.

Q Sounds very dangerous. Did you have any refrigeration to keep some of these things cool?

A No. But at that particular shop there was a lovely cellar under the shop, very dark, you went down some steps to it, and we used to keep butter and all that sort of thing down there in the summertime and the same in the house, there was another cellar under the house, so that you had a sort of refrigeration. I don't think they built houses in those days to stay warm. 'Cos I've got a pantry still there and that's like a 'fridge in the winter especially.

Q What would your day's routine have been like? Did you start by weighing things up?

A Yes. Mondays and Tuesdays were mostly weighing up, except, like I said, there were others of we younger generation went out to get the orders. On Mondays we went round the villages of Sandford and Ledwell and the Burtons(?) that way and then the next week out to Radford and Kiddington, out round that part and one day in the week, we went down to Barton Abbey and round Steeple Barton for orders because they had quite a fair lot of customers you know from the various places.

Q How did people make out their orders? Did you go around and collect the orders and then deliver?

A Yes, and deliver them, because first of all they had a horse and cart and then afterwards, when cars began to get about, they used to hire Mr Irons who had the farm along there, his son used to drive a van for them, and that used to deliver and one of we girls went with him when he delivered, which was great fun.

Q Did those villages have any shops of their own?

A Well, I think most villages did have a little shop but possibly they didn't give credit and of course my uncle they had to give credit to people on a weekly or fortnightly basis.

Q What would have been the next thing in your day? After you'd done the orders?

A After we'd done the orders why you just served in the shop.

Q Do you remember the layout of the shop?

A Oh, yes, yes. You went in ... have you taken note of the way it is up that way? I think I did have some of the postcards ... [looking at postcards]

Q Perhaps you could describe what the shop was like?

A What it was like? Oh yes, more or less. As I say, now it's got two bay windows but they were put after my uncle closed ... When Mr Cox came from London he had the bay windows built on but previously they were little windows like those still in the top of that part of the building and you went in through the door, that was very much the same as it is now, and there was the grocery counter that side and this side there was the drapery counter.

Q So, was the drapery on the right as you went through the door?

A Yes and the grocery on the left and then there's a partition and then a bit farther on there was this part where I was saying there was all these little tiny drawers where they kept pepper and spices and different things, little tiny drawers. Well, the opposite side that's where we kept the sugar there was a big bin like you put flour in, a sack of sugar stood inside and you scooped it out of that. We did all our weighing up down that part there. Then you went a bit farther still to the back and that's where all the bacon was kept and the things that needed keeping cool. I can see it in my mind's eye, I'm not very good at describing the things though. The barrel with soda in stood by the side door as you went out onto the side.

Q What other services did the shop provide?

A Well, they sold all kinds of grocery and we did have a certain amount like most village shops stocked cough mixture and stuff like that, sweets, they did have quite a bit of dried fruit ... in those days you could buy a yard or two of calico stuff as people called it didn't they and things like that, cottons and darning wool and that kind of thing.

Q You were saying about a service to send your clothes off to be dyed ...

A No, that was when my Dad was in the Post Office, before he had the Post Office because he was a tailor by trade, he did that as a little side line.

A ... We used to have to clean the floor, get down on our hands and knees and scrub it, 'cos all out the back it was flagstones, you know, big white flagstones.

Q Do you remember what you had to wear when you were working in the shop?

A Well, I used to wear ordinary clothes plus a overall. No special uniform though. Uncle always wore a white apron, yes he had a big white apron. We ladies wore our pinafores or overalls.

Q How much did you earn?

A I earnt the princely sum of two and six a week when I first started but I did get my dinner and tea there and they were very kind to me, they had a little car after a while and they used to take me out when they went places I had my first visit to London when I were there, going back to one of the Wembley exhibitions, which we thought was great because we watched them making, sort of filling tins with cocoa, you know. Of course by that time things had got ... it was all done on a conveyor belt. But we girls thought that was wonderful.

Q Did you see many changes in the time you worked in the shop?

A Well, not particularly because, as I say, my Dad had the Post Office in 1936. I suppose in that time I worked ten or eleven years in the shop previous you see. I know I didn't fancy coming to look after the Post Office.

Q So why did you?

A In those days parents told you what you'd got to do.

Q Did you ever want to do anything else rather than working in the shop?

A Well, I liked the Post Office you see very much after I got used to it. But previous to that I thought I'd never get used to it after my shop work. I liked the shop work.

Q What did you like especially?

A Well, nothing in particular. It was a nice life, you know, and you met lots of people and you did get the opportunity to go out round and collect from the various places, collecting orders and delivering them, which was quite nice.

Q Was the shop a real social centre in the village?

Q Well, yes, yes, You'd get quite a lot of people coming in. But then we had quite a number of shops then because just along what we call the Top Dock just this side of where the shop was on the corner there, there was another shop where those bay windows are, Mrs Parsons kept that shop, that was quite interesting and there was the one that Audrey was talking about that Mr Allday (?) kept at a later date and he had a niece that ... they came from the Birmingham area to that shop after Mrs Parsons and I know Gladys who worked for him, the niece, always used to say what a hard life it was. Still, I suppose we all survived.

Q What other shops were there in the village then?

A Well, apart from that one there was this one which was a Mrs Parsons in those days, she was a very energetic lady in the village, after they retired from the shop and her husband was a builder and he built quite a few of the houses that are round this way. She always kept a parrot. We used to be amused when we went into the shop because the parrot wasn't in the shop it was in the kitchen which was down some steps but it used to talk. Then there was Miss Farley just down round this first corner there down towards the stream a (?) little shop. There was an old lady in South Street, she kept a shop sold sweets and different things, tobacco. At one time there was somebody kept a shop just along this road on the left down beside. That was more during the 1939-1945 war. They were some people who'd come from London and they opened a little shop there and sold all kinds of drapery. There used to be one up the Worton road farther up than where Webb's is, right up the top where the cottages are up the top near to the council estate.

Q Could you do most of your shopping in the village?

A Oh yes, people didn't go out shopping in those days. Course, we had a butcher and all you see. We had two bakers. There was Constable's in South Street ... well, he also was a farmer as well as baker and when he died another person came, a Mr Gardiner, and they were more enterprising. They started selling all sorts of things, cakes and the same Pillings followed the Gardiners they did the same thing, in fact Mrs Billing used to come round with the van with the bread and she brought all sorts of things like cakes, flour. We've usually been very well served with people coming round selling things. Course the greengrocer comes round still I think ... sells all kinds of groceries I think.

Q Did you ever go further afield to do some shopping? A great excitement perhaps?

A Only if we wanted some new clothes then you did have to go to Oxford or Banbury for new clothing. Not until after my father died I never bought any coats because he always made them. When he had the Post Office that was in there. Would you like to have a look? It's rather cold in there but you're welcome.....

Q Where else did people come round from apart from Woodstock?

A Well, the Co-op always used to come from Chipping Norton. There was a lot of competition in the old times for the little bit of custom there was. Course there nowadays everybody goes to town to supermarkets, more or less. I do most of my shopping locally, 'cos it's a bit of a job carrying it if you go to town to get it isn't there. Otherwise people with cars just go once a fortnight or so and shop don't they?

Q That must have made a great difference to village shops?

A Oh, it does. We're lucky to still have got our shop, you see because so many of the villages around they've lost all their shops.



Like Steeple Aston, which is quite a big village , I don't know whether they've still got one shop ... We went to school at Steeple Aston when we got to eleven and there was the Co-op, the Co-op had a branch of their shop at Steeple Aston and there was Parish's(?) store and another lady who lived down what we called Cow Lane who sold sweets. We used to fly there in the dinner hour when we were at school, buy sweets.

Q What about newspapers?

A Newspapers? Well, there's always been newspapers locally, because at one time Mr Jarvis kept the garage along there and they did the newspapers for years. But in those days they used to have to fetch them from Heyford station. You used to have to go on a bicycle. My brother's friend, who is still alive, he often talks about the days when he used to have to ride a bicycle to fetch the papers from Heyford station.

Q How far is that?

A Between three and four miles.

Q Did you ever have to do that?

A Oh no, 'cos we didn't have anything to do with newspapers. Not at Kirby's or Mr Cox. They always did them from Jarvis' which was just down the road here. Just the last few years the garage down the way there, they've sold various bits and bobs, biscuits and sweets, drinks, canned drinks, lemonade.

Q You must tell me about the "monster" fizzy drink.

A Oh, the fizzy drink, yes. My uncle used to make the fizzy drink. It was a funny machine that he had , it was a funny contraption, more like a treadle. He'd only got one leg and it was something you had to work with a pedal and then you put something into it to colour it or to make it fizz. I can remember when he first used to do it the bottles they had - you've seen them bottles where there was like a glass marble you pushed down - it used to be that sort.

Q How much did it cost?

A Oh, about a penny or tuppence, in those days, none of your fancy prices.

Q Was it very popular?

A Oh, yes, yes, specially in the summer. You felt very sort of highly favoured if you were allowed a bottle of that kind of squashy stuff that fizzed a bit. It was luxury.

Q You didn't sell any beer?

A Oh no. There was one of the shops; that little shop down the mill there, Miss Farley, they had an off licence. Course Webb's now sell all sorts of drinks, don't they? Well, you see, I suppose you still do have to have a licence to sell those kind of thing? And in the old days, as I remember, you had to have a licence to sell tobacco and cigarettes. When my uncle always had to go, I think to Deddington, to the Petty Sessions there to get these various licences. A rather complicated business.

Q So your uncle did sell that?

A They sold tobacco and cigarettes. Oh and snuff. Those little drawers, they kept snuff along there , in those little drawers. Made you sneeze terribly you know, snuff did and people used to buy a quarter of an ounce, which you put in a little tiny bag, quarter of an ounce, you couldn't hardly see it.

Q Did many of the goods that were in the shop come pre-packaged?

A Not a lot, no, not a lot. You did get biscuits, some biscuits in packets. Mostly in tins, you know, sort of, and then you had to weigh them up. People chose from the stack of (?) what sort they wanted, weighed half a pound or whatever. No, there was no packaging at that time, in those days. It was a very funny old lady lived across the way from the shop, when I was there, well poor woman, she was very poor, her husband was blind and they had three children and poor lady she'd come out across to the shop a dozen times in a day to fetch a penny cake.

Q Did you sell sweets?

A They did sell sweets, yes. In those days there were lots of sweets that you could buy. You got so many for a halfpenny. Of course, in those days no sweets were wrapped. They were all loose. You would screw up a bit of newspaper into a haq and put them in there. There's a big change now, isn't there?

Q When you were working in the shop did you think that that way of shopping was going to go on for ever? Did you expect it to change?

A Well, I mean, everything has changed , hasn't it? Possibly in those days there wasn't the amount of transport to get anywhere, shopping out of town rather than in the village. Latterly we did have a bus but these same people Jarvis that kept the garage, they had the first bus in Barton. Used to run to Oxford and Banbury. And at one time ....

Q ... When did the change in shopping styles come about?

A Well, it's difficult to pinpoint the exact time, isn't it. As people had cars I think then they began to go out more to shop. But in those very old days most people hadn't got the money for one thing, had they? Not to go too far afield to do shopping. People used to ride bicycles a long way in the old days. We didn't think anything of going to Oxford on bicycles or to Banbury on a bicycle. We should think twice now because of the traffic. But it's different for all you young people who have grown up with all the gadgets and modern transport to realise what it was like. I think in those days people made their own entertainment, you know. We didn't have now, for instance, you could go to Oxford or Bancury to the pictures 'cos that was one of the treats that we used to get from the shop sometimes. My cousins we'd go into Oxford when it was closing time. We'd have our tea at the Cadena and go to the show.

Q That was what you did on your afternoons off?

A Not very often. We couldn't afford to do it very often...

(question about Ruth Kirby's British Empire Medal - - - )

A ... The Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire came to present it. And then the next year I did get an invite to one of the garden parties and a lady from Steeple Aston - I wasn't going, I said ... Course, when you're invited to a garden party you can take one guest you see and I thought who I could take up to London with me , but my brother was going with me to start, he didn't really want to go, he was the sort didn't like parties, so a lady in the village got to hear about it that I'd been invited and she said "of course you must go". So she knew the vicar's wife from Steeple Aston and there was person at Steeple Aston who'd been the school cook for a good many years over there and she had this same medal twelve months before I did and she'd had an invitation to this party, so after she'd packed up cooking school dinners she worked for the vicar's wife at Steeple you see and she took us up to London. It was quite an exciting day.

Q Was your British Empire Medal for services as a Postmistress?

A Yes....

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## HISTORY OF THE LUING FAMILY

Ethel G Davis, Iowa 1936

Alfred Luing was born at Steeple Barton, England, March 6, 1835. Isabella Wyatt was also born at Steeple Barton, November 28, 1839. As a young woman she was employed as a chambermaid in the house of a wealthy family, while Alfred Luing was a day laborer. They were united in marriage January 25, 1860 at Steeple Barton by the Rev. William Green, and the following spring came to America to found a home. As several relatives of Mr. Luing resided at Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, namely, a brother, two uncles and two aunts, that place became the first home of the Luing's in America. The three older children were born there, Mary Anna, born October 30, 1860; Frances Isabella (later nicknamed Fanny) born April 21, 1862; and Henry Edmund, born April 13, 1864. In the year 1865, after five years residence at Fort Atkinson, the family came to Iowa, settling at Marshalltown, where they lived for a short time, and then moved to Lamoille, also in Marshall County, where Grandpa Luing worked on the section and was also engaged in farming with his half-brother for a time. Two children were born at Lamoille, William George, born August 8, 1866, and Frederic John, born December 30, 1868. As Lady Luck did not seem to smile on the farming enterprise, the family moved to State Center in Marshall County, where Grandpa Luing was section foreman, and where the family lived for eight years. Three children were born in State Center, Earnest George, born April 23, 1870; an infant, un-named, died at birth about the year 1872; and John Alfred, born February 4, 1874. In the year 1876 the family moved to a farm which they bought, five miles southwest of Rhodes, and where on April 19 of that same year, George Arthur was born. Three years later, on March 5, 1879, Laura May was born. The last child, the eleventh, was born August 27, 1881, and was named Bertie Wyatt, being given his mother's maiden name.

During these first years on the farm, the family suffered losses, hardships, privations, and sorrow. It was here that Death again entered the home, when little Laura May at the age of one year was accidentally scalded when she pulled over a kettle of boiling water. The third death occurred about two years later when Bertie Wyatt was taken in infancy about the year 1882.

In 1881, Fanny Luing entered the teaching profession, and for nine years she taught the three R's in the rural schools of Story and Marshall counties. The first marriage in the family occurred when the oldest daughter, Mary Anna decided to let someone else buy her flour and baking powder, and so left the old home to found a new one. One by one the other children followed, until all were gone. While residing on the farm, Grandpa Luing served for many years as secretary and treasurer of the Pleasant Ridge School Board. He also served as manager of the Collins Creamery for a time, but the duties proved too heavy for him, and he resigned as manager, but served as secretary for a time afterward. About this time, he and his wife decided to move to Collins to be near his work, living there for a short time, then returning to the old home to spend their remaining years. They lived here for over 30 years, until the Grim Reaper again entered the home, January 22, 1909, and Grandfather Luing was left alone. Had Grandmother lived one more year they would have celebrated their Golden Wedding. They lacked just three days of having spent 49 years of life together. She passed away at the age of 69. After her going, Grandpa Luing spent the remaining years of his life with his children in Iowa and Minnesota, where he owned land for a time. He passed away June 29, 1915, at the home of Joe and Fanny Davis in Rhodes at the age of 80 years. The next death in the

immediate family occurred ten years later when George Arthur passed away at his home in Rhodes, May 17, 1925, at the age of 49. March 24, 1936, William George passed away in Collins at the age of 69. With the exception of the first few years of their lives spent in Wisconsin, Anna, Fanny, and Henry have lived their lives in Iowa; Anna and Fanny in Story and Marshall Counties. For more than 40 years Henry has lived in Dickinson County. William also spent his entire life in Story and Marshall Counties, and Earnest in Marshall and Jasper Counties. Four members of the family with their wives and children, at some time lived on the old home place. They were Fred, George, John and Earnest. William also lived on the farm of his father for a time. George, John and Fred also lived in Minnesota, and the last two named, reside there now, and have for many years.

The descendents of Alfred and Isabella Luing, including their wives and husbands, have numbered 204, with 186 of this number living, and 19 are dead. They are widely scattered, with residences in eight states, but the greater number, 103, reside in Iowa, mainly in the counties of Story, Marshall and Jasper. Forty-eight live in Minnesota, while some are almost to the Pacific Coast, in Oregon, and others in far-off Utah. Still others have made homes in Nebraska, Illinois, North and South Dakota.

No less than six of Alfred Luing's descendents have been named for him. They are John Alfred Luing, a son, Porter, Minnesota; Benjamin Alfred Ball, a grandson, McCallsburg; Leslie Alfred Luing, a grandson, of Chicago; John Alfred Ball, a great grandson, of McCallsburg, who was born on the day that Grandpa Luing died; John Alfred Elliott, a great grandson, of Rock Island; and Alfred George Luing, a great grandson of Worthington, Minnesota, who perhaps is the only Alfred Luing living, with that as a first name.

The descendents of Alfred and Isabella Luining are now numbered in the fifth generation, there being ten in this group. They are Jacqueline, Mary Ann, and Carolyn Sue Adams, Carol Penelope Mathis, Russell William Ball, and Sandra Sorenson, all great grandchildren of Anna Ball; Paul, Lawrence and Patricia Ann Tigh, great grandchildren of William Luining; and Harold Amos Barbee, a great grandson of Earnest Luining.

Many changes have taken place in the last 25 years. Aunt Anna Ball once rode to the city of Des Moines in a lumber wagon, holding her three week old baby daughter, Ella, in her arms, because she thought it might be her first, last, and only opportunity to go there. But the day came, when in her car she could make the trip in a fraction of the time it took that day, so long ago, when she rode long, weary miles with her tiny baby in her arms. Grandmother Luining died without ever having rode in an automobile. She never saw a movie, much less a talkie; she never heard of a radio; she never stepped outside in her yard and heard an airplane zoom through the heavens over her head; she was not fanned by electricity, nor was her food kept cool by that method; neither did it furnish power for her washer, sweeper, flat iron or stove. She did not read her evening paper by it; she never had her hair curled by this method, and a permanent wave would have frightened her to pieces, most likely. She did not buy milk in tin cans, or her bread sliced ready to lay on the plate. Probably she ground her coffee in a mill attached to the old kitchen cupboard, and she may have scoured her knives and forks with brick dust, shaved from an old red brick. She never voted in an election, and perhaps never heard of a "depression". They called it plain, "hard times" in those pioneering days she lived through.

She could not possibly have received her daily paper the same day it left the press. Who knows what wonders the children of this generation may yet see?

Read August 23, 1936

Ethel G. Davis

New Providence, Iowa

end of document



**Letter to Alfred Luing from His father in England January 24 1870**

**Original writer:**

**Henry L. Luing 1807 – 1892, Steeple Barton**

**Sexton and Clerk at St Mary's Church 1837 – 1887**

*(transcribed June/2010 BHG, photocopy of a hand-written letter available from BHG)*

*(previously transcribed in hand-written form)*

*(letter courtesy Larry L. Luing)*

*(page 1)*

Jan 24 - 1870.

Dear Son and Daughter,

I now take the pleasure of writing these few lines to you. I hope you don't think I forgot you. I intended to write with Mrs. Parson (?) last time but I was a day too late, as she had wrote to her father. I hope this finds you all in good health, as it leaves us, all at present, thank God. I received your newspaper and likeness which I am very please with them. If it please God to spare me till Spring, I will go to Oxford and have my likeness taken. I heard from your brother Edward twice since I received your letter. He sent for your direction. I wrote to tell him that I should write to you on Christmas. I have not heard from him since. They are quite well, with their kindest love to you all.

Charles is in the coast of West Africa. William is at Mr. Price's. John is up at your Aunt Luing's.

*(page 2)*

Fred goes to school, he is ten years old beginning of next month. Maria and Watson send their kindest love to you all. She was confined with a son the Wednesday before Christmas. I don't know of anything particular news to tell you this time. I sent you a newspaper fortnight since. I shall be most happy to hear from you as soon as convenient to write, and I will answer your letter in a few weeks. I must (?), with our kindest love to you all, our love to the children

H. L. Luing

end of document

## Letter to Alfred Luing from His father in England January 23 1876

**Original writer:**

**Henry L. Luing 1807 – 1892, Steeple Barton**

**Sexton and Clerk at St Mary's Church 1837 – 1887**

*(transcribed June/2010 BHG, photocopy of a hand-written letter available from BHG)*

*(previously transcribed in hand-written form)*

*(letter courtesy Larry L. Luing)*

*(page 1)*

Steeple Barton

Jan 23 - 1876

Dear Son and Daughter and Children:

You must forgive me for not writing before. I wanted to have my likeness taken before I wrote to you. I had them taken short time ago. Your mother wrote to Charles, sent him one. They was pasted together. I hope these few lines will find you all quite well, with our kindest love to you all. Mr. Green left last May. We have got an excellent Curate. His time is up in May. We have a new organ at the church. The opening of the organ was on Christmas Day. Mrs A.H. Hall (?) at the Lodge is the organist. Cost £600, the organ chamber cost £200. I have been clerk 39 years, 9<sup>th</sup> of this month. I was born the 6<sup>th</sup> of Sept, 1807. I was 68 years old last birthday. Thank God for the mercies he has favoured me. I enjoy very good health. I am not able to do much hard work now.

*(page 2)*

I am at the Lodge, jobbing about. Dear Alfred, our family is very small now, we have only Fred with us, he is 16 years old. He is at the Stables. William is married to Emma Matthews, 3 months ago. They have got a daughter. William has got a bad cold. Maria living at Winslow. She came down to see us last summer with her 3 sons. John is at Wolverton works painting carriages. He is lodging with Eliza Parsons, John Parsons sister. She is married and settled there. I expect that he will be married to here daughter very soon. John has got to walk 3 miles to work. They employ about 300 men at the works. Ned has not wrote to me for 3 years. I don't know his direction (means address). Tell Vincent Parson that William was not at church. They are all well, James is gone to London – policeman. Gone 3 weeks. Mr Hinch (?) is dead buried last Thursday. Emma Luing is dead. She was married 2 days after our William.

*(page 3)*

She was married – mother – and dead less than twelve months. Dear Alfred, I hop that you will write back and I will too, as soon as I receive your letter. We three are all quite well, thank God, and I hope these few lines will find all the same. With our kindest love to you all, Sunday evening,

H. L. Luing.

end of document

**Letter to Alfred Luing from His father in England October 5<sup>th</sup> 1880**

**Original writer:**

**Henry L. Luing 1807 – 1892, Steeple Barton**

**Sexton and Clerk at St Mary's Church 1837 – 1887**

*(transcribed June/2010 BHG, photocopy of a hand-written letter available from BHG)  
(previously transcribed in hand-written form)  
(letter courtesy Larry L. Luing)*

*(page 1)*

Steeple Barton  
Oct 5<sup>th</sup> - 1880

Dear Son, Daughter and grand children:

I hope you will forgive me for not writing before but I hope these few lines will find all in good health, as it leaves us at this time, thank God. I am sorry to hear of the accident of your daughter and misfortune of your horse. The 29<sup>th</sup> of Sept. our new burial ground was consecrated by Bishop of Oxford. Large meeting of people. Last year we had 36 funerals. Our church yard is closed. There is no particular news.

Finished harvest, Barnes (?) late. Bailey and William and wife and three children are well. John and wife all well, living at Castle Shop (?). Maria is still living at Winslow Burke (?). Fred out of place, 4 weeks. He has got a new situation, Dormer Es (?) and Rousham. I have not heard from Ned for several years. I am much better now than I have been long time. I was laid up with the rheumatics 10 weeks.

*(page 2)*

I am working still for (?). Painting is chief of my work – and church work. Dear Alfred, I hope you will write as soon as convenient, not be so neglected as I was. Mrs. Mayo will tell you all the news of Barton. I must conclude with our kindest love to you all. God bless you all,

H. L Luing.

*(note by Ethel Davis, see her 'History of the Luing Family'):*

Ann Mayo who lived at Lamoille was a step-sister of Isabella Luing. Ann was a daughter of James Benson who married Frances Wyatt (known as "Little Grandma").

end of document

## Grand daughters (UK) of William Luing.

**Mrs. Joan Rowlands, Bloxham, Oxfordshire. (letter 30<sup>th</sup> - Dec - 1985)**

**Mrs. S Smith, Rugby, Warwickshire. (letter undated)**

*(from letters requesting BHG booklets, full addresses retained by the Group at the time.)*

*Mrs S. Smith writes:*

“My interest is mainly because my mother and family lived in Steeple Barton. She was married at Steeple Barton Church where her father was Sexton (William Luing). The family name was Luing. I also had an uncle Frank Cooper who was a groom at the Abbey.”

*Mrs Joan Rowlands writes:*

“My grandfather William Luing was Sexton at Steeple Barton Church for many years.”

*also*

“I am going to send the book to Miss Luing in the USA. She is Henry Luing's great grand daughter too. Her grand father Alfred Luing married Isabelle Wyatt at Steeple Barton, 1860 and they went to America soon after. Their descendants, about 300 now, have a Luing re-union every year. Henry Luing was Sexton at Steeple Barton for over 50 years. I am not sure how long William was but I imagine he took it over from his father. He died in 1922. His wife, my grand mother who was Emma Matthews, lived until she was 95. That is her in the photo of the cottages which I think were in the fields near the Abbey but I think have been pulled down now. My mother's sister who was Esther Luing is still alive and living in Canada. She will be 97 in June. She married Frank Cooper who was groom at the Abbey and went to Canada 1912. She came for a visit 1975 and found Barton very changed.”

*also*

“Testimonial to Mr. Henry Luing. Mr. Henry Luing having now for 50 years fulfilled the duties of Clerk in the Parish of Steeple Barton, his fellow parishioners and friends whose names are enrolled below do hereby present him with the sum of £30 as a testimonial of their regard as recognition of the assiduous attention which has ever characterised him in the discharge of his office. There follows 60 names headed by Hon Mrs. Hall. April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1887”

end of document

## SOME MEMORIES OF THE BARTONS

1920s-1930s

by MRS 'BUBBLES' PRATLEY

My memories go back to the 1920s when I started at the village school of the Bartons in North Oxfordshire. It was quite usual to be admitted, as I was, at the age of 3 plus. We children walked to school, walked home for lunch and back again to school in the afternoon. The heating was by open coal fires and coke stoves and although the school house had a water pump, water used for school was fetched by two pupils from the mill stream in tall white enamel jugs. The school house was where the headmaster and his wife, who also taught at the school, lived. The discipline was very strict and the cane was used. Sometimes even such things as mistakes in writing were corrected by knuckles being rapped hard with thick blue marking pencils. Even now I well remember the pain. Green coarse knitting wool was used by girls and when the lesson was over the 'wool' was rewound and used over and over again.

Games were played in season, top spinning, followed by skipping, bowling of hoops, hopscotch and how welcome in the twenties were the Yo-Yo and the Biff Bat! My favourite was top spinning and I loved going to the village shop to choose a top. We played in the road and in those days I could spin my top for a quarter of an hour or longer without having to stop because of traffic. Now, just to cross the road, I may have to wait for several cars to go by.

There was, however, a lot of illness - the dreaded consumption, diphtheria, scarlet fever, head lice and ringworm were very prevalent. I remember boys wearing skull caps to hide the gentian blue on their heads after being treated for ringworm. I remember, too, that when children died, it was usual for the coffin to be carried by children at the funeral. We girls wore white when we carried a baby's coffin, and I believe that this, as well as the event itself, used to move bystanders to tears.

Our diet was quite stodgy, based mainly on suet puddings (butcher's suet) which were sweet or savoury. A suet crust was made as follows: 4 oz suet, 8 oz plain flour (most people nowadays use self raising flour), this was mixed with water to a pliable, rolling dough. On this basic dough the well loved 'BACON CLANGER' was made. The dough was covered with chopped bacon and onion, and grated potato could be added to give a moist 'Clanger'. This was rolled like a Swiss roll, placed on a cotton cloth, tied with string, put in boiling water and simmered for 1 to 2 hours. Steaming and rolling in foil will **never** give the same flavour. The 'Clanger' was served hot and leftovers were often warmed in the frying pan next day.

Every household was fairly self sufficient - hens in the back garden and vegetables and fruit home grown or from the allotment. Potatoes were in clamps of earth and straw but if the winter was very

severe it was impossible to open the clamps. Runner beans were salted and eggs preserved in isinglass (I did not much enjoy these). Most families kept a pig and many kept two, one for themselves and one to sell. They would go round asking for orders for the various parts, and when the time for killing came it was surprising how many 'friends' the family seemed to have!

My grandfather was the baker who, as well as baking bread, also used the oven to cook the Sunday Yorkshire puddings and joints. It was the men who went to collect the dinners, and they used the occasion as a great opportunity for the exchange of news. They carried the dinners home under a white cloth - and no Yorkshire pudding today ever tastes as good. The batter was made from skimmed farm milk (which cost 4d for a four pint can). Pies and tarts were also cooked and these provisions lasted over the next two days to feed the family while the ritual of washing and ironing was carried out.

My mother cooked by oil stove and also had an oven by the fire place. I can remember her browning the top of a shepherd's pie by holding a red hot shovel near it. We didn't have a grill in those days, and one of our pleasures was sitting by the fire on the (home made) hearth rug toasting bread. It tasted delicious. We had no piped water and no flush toilets. The contents of the privy were spread over the allotments, a practice that was said to produce exceptionally good rhubarb. Most of the men worked on farms and many walked great distances to work. I can remember them in wet weather wearing sacks cut to form a hood and hanging down at the back.

As a child, one of the highlights of the year was the Women's Institute Christmas party for children. Times, however, were changing. At one party, a member of the gentry presented each child with a shilling - a considerable sum in those days. We were supposed to curtsy to her but my grandmother told me that I was not now to do this and if I did not receive a shilling she would give me one. I did not curtsy but I **was** presented with the shilling at the party. When I was 16 I joined the WI, and am still a member. I then graduated to their very popular adult Christmas parties and joined in their many activities and entertainments. These included one play in which every word began with the letter W.

We mostly made our own entertainment but we also had a cinema, one of the first village cinemas, and although a small village we had a number of shops, we had a post office, four general stores, two bakers, a butcher, a fishmonger, a miller, a tailor, a saddler, and these were supplemented by a number of travelling salesmen. The village has grown but today we have only one shop cum post office and a shop run in conjunction with the Garage. We do, however, have a flourishing village school.

I have been looking back at the past and remembering many things that do not happen now. Village life has changed and there are those of us who said "the village will never be the same" as houses were built and newcomers arrived. I for one say now "how good it has been, the village is alive and well in consequence".

The Bartons Village Appraisal book tells all, culminating in a wonderful Village Appraisal day in September 1993. I, among many, was a very proud old Bartonian with thanks indeed to the new Bartonians.



Another popular recipe is for Bread Pudding.

8 oz slightly stale bread

½ pint milk

1 ½ oz Demerara sugar pinch  
salt

2 eggs

6 oz mixed dried fruit

1 oz candied peel

2 oz suet (or 2 oz melted lard)

1 level teaspoon mixed spice

Grated nutmeg to taste

Grease baking tin or dish (1 ½ pint size)

Cut bread into 1 inch cubes. Place in bowl. Put milk and salt into a saucepan, boil and pour over bread. Stir well and leave to stand for 15 minutes. Lightly beat eggs and stir into bread. Add remainder of ingredients, mix well and put into prepared dish. Sprinkle with a little nutmeg and bake in a moderate oven (Mark 4 – 180°C – 350°F) for about 45 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

## H. M. The Queen's Garden Party July 1981.

**Author: Mrs. 'Bubbles' Pratley.**

On a sunny May morning 1981 the post arrived, an unusual looking envelope set upside down on the door mat, more advertising I thought and behold it contained an invitation from the Lord Chamberlain to attend the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 14<sup>th</sup> July, it was all a complete surprise, no one in the know slipped one word. Who says a village cannot keep a secret?!!

From the day the invitation arrived bush telegraph took over, 'What are you going to wear' was on the lips of my female friends, family and here my friend Muriel took over, made a two piece in sage green.

THE day dawned bright, warm and sunny, I had been most fortunate, Dr. and Mrs. Ryan also in the village had received an invitation, they most kindly offered to transport me along with them. A Royal Fever was upon us, only two weeks to go to the wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Diana, (?) think I walked into the palace up the same carpeted grass that the Royal couple were to walk after their arrival back at the Palace after their marriage.

Oh, how grand the Palace was, seemed to be haze of Red and Gold and in no time at all we were on the Terrace overlooking acres of garden and thousands of people, what a colour spectacle, twas (?) like the films, the Queen arrived on the Terrace, the band played the National Anthem, her Majesty looked radiant, a dress with a small mauve floral print with a matching band around her picture hat, with her, Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles, Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and Princess Alice of Gloucester. We also saw Prime Minister Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, her husband Dennis and Mr. and Mrs. Michael Soames – Sir Winston Churchill's daughter and husband. Her Majesty after talking to many people on the long walk to the Royal Marquee had tea, we sat down to chocolate cake – very nice - drop scones – ghastly! and refreshing iced coffee.

Time passed quickly, the Yeoman of the Guard busily prepared the gangways for the Royal Party, we went to admire the gardens and the lawns were absolutely weed free, the delphiniums (?) in their beautiful blue were at perfection, a child's swing hanging from the branch at a (?) tree gave it a real family touch, returned from the gardens and were so lucky to have a wonderful position to be at close quarters as the Royal Family came from tea to return into the Palace.

One took time to depart, savoured every moment, softly said to oneself 'is this really happening to me?' Cars arrived, Daimlers, Rolls Royce, diplomat, crested cars galore. Out of the inner, into the outer court (?), hundreds of tourists looking through the black and gold rails and to think for a very few moments, I was on the inside of Buckingham Palace looking OUT!

# **First Company of Girl Guides in the Bartons**

**Mona Owen**

**(recorded by Audrey Martin, 1985)**

The first company of Girl Guides was formed in Barton in 1923-24 by Mrs Pike of Barton Abbey. She lived there prior to Major and Mrs. Fleming. Miss Sybil Emerton (?) of Cocksparrow Hall, Enstone Hill, was Captain and I was asked to be Lieutenant. We had two patrols, 7 girls in each and met in the Mission Hall as it was then called on Thursday evenings. Unfortunately, we had to be disbanded although I cannot remember how long we functioned. Our District Commissioner was Lady Victoria de Trafford who at that time was living in Duns Tew Manor. She took a great interest in us and often popped in at meetings. She decided Miss Emerton although a charming person was not quite the person for Captain. However, in the short time we were going we had some very happy times. I remember especially one Saturday when all of us went to A Rally in Oxford. Lady Olave Baden-Powell came to address us. She visited all the stalls and bought a dressed chicken meaning to collect it later. When she was about to leave, this chicken was thrust into my hands and I had to make a dash after the car and hand it over. I also had 2 happy weeks camping at Ringwood taking 2 guides with me. We found guides from Deddington, Duns Tew and North Aston. I left Barton in 1933 when I married and came to live in Wales.

Wishing all Barton Guides success and happiness. Mona Owen.

Letter to Audrey Martin from Mrs. Marjorie Young, Adderbury.  
July 14th 1985.

Manor Farm and the Goffe Family.

My husband, Eric, and I went to Manor Farm, Middle Barton September 29th, 1955. This farm was bought by the Goffe family from Mr. Constable of Middle Barton in the late 1940s. Mr. Constable was the village baker and farmed Manor Farm but he let the farm lease (?) - previous to this the land and house were owned by Miss Painter who was the Lady of the Manor, though she never lived there. The acreage of the farm was 140 acres and the dairy herd was the main source of income. There were two employees on the farm but soon my husband and one other worker ran the farm - I ran the poultry side with a flock of geese and 400 hens - some eggs went to Thames Valley Egg Packers and I sold fresh eggs at the door to many in the village. We had a covered yard erected leading from the milking parlour so that the cows could be kept under cover in winter. Mr. Ken Castle did some building work and repairs. There was not a garden in front of the house when we went to Manor Farm, the paddock was up to the front door steps so I made lawns and flower beds. Miss Kirby was at the post office - Miss Farley at the general shop in Mill Lane. - she had an off-licence as well. Mrs. Hall had a shop in North Street, which was previously a blacksmith's shop.

Mr. Cox had a general store on the main road opposite the butcher's shop run by Mr. Allen. Webb's shop was opened a few years before we retired from the farm. I was a member of the Mothers' Union and Mrs. Wilmot Griffiths (rector's wife) had our meetings at the rectory. I also was a W.I. member and we had our meetings at the Mission Hall. The flower show held at the Rectory Garden of Westcote Barton was always a happy occasion - I usually entered the flower section and cookery and Susan, our daughter, who was 7 when we went to Manor Farm, enjoyed being an entrant in the children's sections. Susan was at the primary school, taught by Mrs. Bayliss (head teacher), and she was successful in getting her 11+ examination, from Bartons she went as a weekly boarder to Brackley High School. The last six years that we were at Manor Farm I was church warden at Steeple Barton Church - Major Fleming who had been church warden for many years and a wonderful man had to resign owing to ill-health.

My grandfather, William Garner (?) Goffe, was born at Barton - on - the - Heath (by Long Compton) in 1850 - he married Mary Harris (of Hook Norton Brewery). William Garner died in 1904, and my grandmother, Mary, died in 1903. William Garner's father was William Henry Goffe - he farmed two or three farms at the Barton - Holliers Farm, Elm Grove Farm, Manor Farm, Westcote Barton, and he and Mary both died while they were farming and living at Church Farm, Steeple Barton. They had 5 sons, William 1884-1933, who farmed Church Farm after his parents died, Frank, my father, 1885-1976 who farmed at Hill Farm, Duns Tew for 52 years, Percy 1888-1979 who farmed at Chipping Warden for 50 years, Horace 1890-1963 who farmed at Park Farm, Adderbury until he died and Raymond 1893-1975, who, after serving in the First World War farmed at White Horse (?) Farm, Kiddington.

I should have said when speaking of Manor Farm that when I was a child at Duns Tew, my father would bring the sheep over to the mill at Barton (opposite Manor Farm) to be washed - my great uncle, John Harris, owned the mill at that time. When we were farming at Manor Farm, Lady Margaret Drummond Hay lived at the mill and her sister, Lady Zinioff, was our other near neighbour at Village Farm, where Anneli Drummond Hay schooled 'Merely a Monarch' and her other horses. There were cottages the other side of the brook and in them lived Harry Pollis (?), John Humphries and Miss Baker. Where the bungalows are in Jacob's Yard there was a row of thatched cottages, only one was occupied by Teddy Woodley. My uncle, William Goffe, was church warden at Steeple Barton and his daughter, Doris, played the organ for many years. My grandfather, William Garner, was also church warden and all his 5 sons sang in the choir at church.

..... I have been tracing the Goffe family tree and have found that they were all yeoman farmers from Hook Norton since 1650, and several of my ancestors are buried in Hook Norton church yard - William Garner's mother and father are there and more of the Goffes.....

Letter to Mr. Kent from Mrs. Sylvia Sheppard (nee Hawtin).  
14 January 1988.

Visit to the Bartons with her husband and son.

.....I was born at the cottage just above the Methodist Chapel and lived in and around Barton until 1940. Other members of the family were still living there for some years after that and I still have an aunt at Hook Norton., and to me Oxfordshire is still home even after all these years. My maiden name was Sylvia Hawtin and some names I remember from then are May Shirley, Mrs. Eaglestone and family, Vernon Law, Mr and Mrs Howe, Jocelyn Simpson (I believe with a brother named Joe), Bill Baker, Joan Biford (whose mother I think was the school headmistress at that time). I still have a school photograph taken 1939 or 1940 if anyone is interested in seeing it.....

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