

Introduction

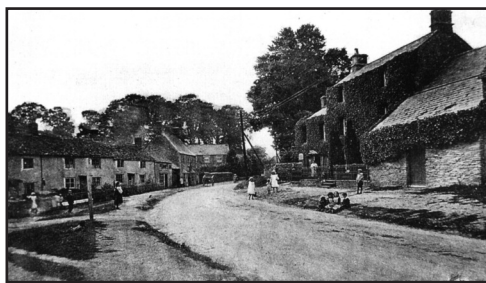
John Madden

Chairman: Bartons' History Group

This volume, which is intended to be the first of a series, is dedicated to the memory of Audrey Martin, who founded the Bartons History Group and was for many years, until her death in 2000, the main driving force behind it. She left us a legacy of information – photos, documents, genealogies – but also of inspiration, to continue and build upon her work.

Audrey's name was the first one I learnt of in the village when planning to move here in 1983: "if you want to know anything about Middle Barton, ask Audrey Martin!" When we attended the occasional History talks in the Chapel, it was Audrey who had organised them. When I became a School Governor, it was Audrey, as Clerk, who organised us! And it was Audrey who provided much of the impetus to start the Village Appraisal project which was to lead to the launch of the Dorn Free Press. In between all this she was publishing the monthly Bulletin and, of course, continuing to collect information about the Bartons. When the publisher of the "*Changing Faces*" series of local history books was seeking an author for a volume on the Bartons, who else would he turn to but Audrey Martin?

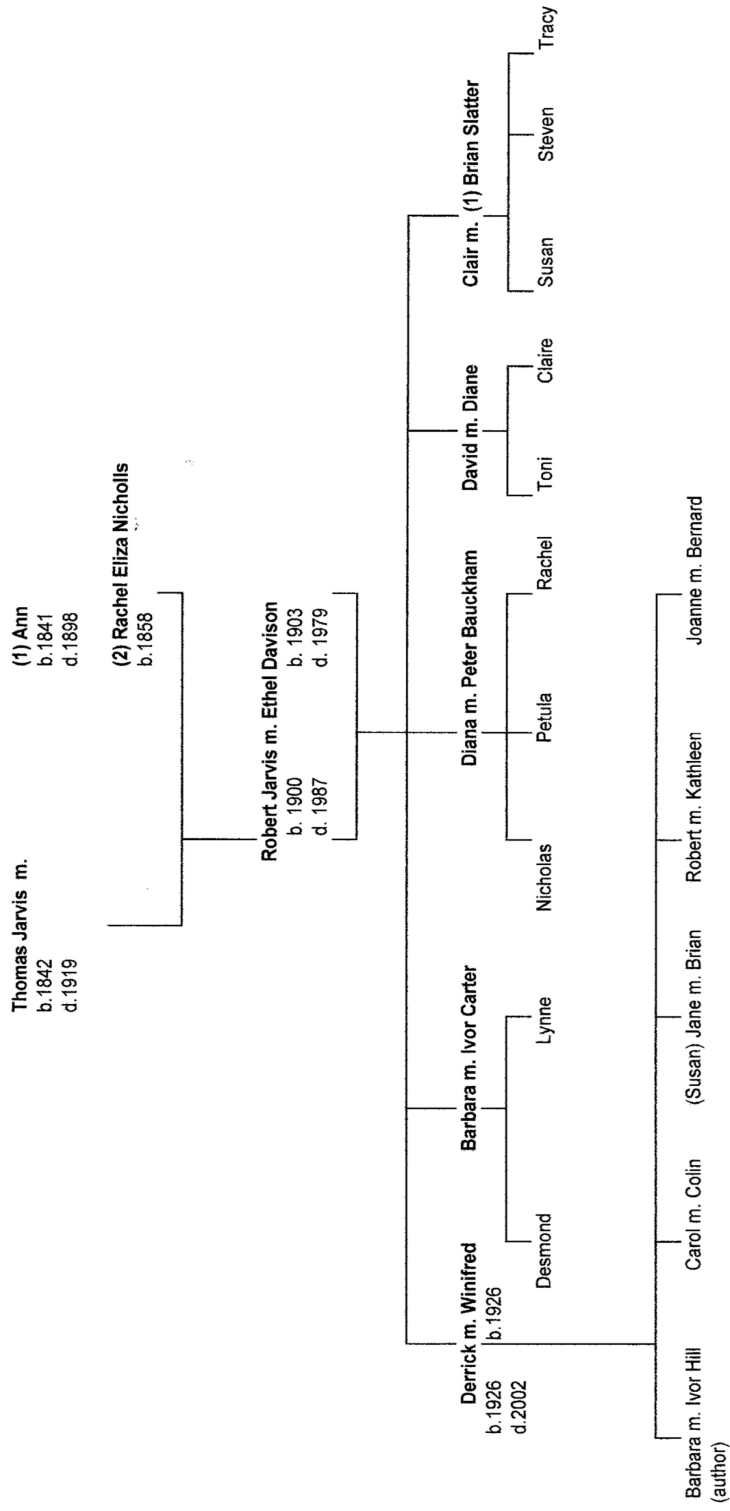
Audrey and her husband Dick were early converts to the idea of storing information digitally and I am sure they would have approved of the Group's project, now more or less completed, to make available on the website all the photographs she had collected, and of the ongoing project to digitise as much of the non-photographic archive as possible. Not only does this make the information accessible to a very much wider public, but it also preserves it for future generations – and I can picture Audrey beaming with pleasure at that thought!



Luig's Shop, North Street, Middle Barton c.1900

From Saddles to School Meals

The Jarvis Family Tree



From Saddles to School Meals

Barbara Hill

For the past 220 years there have been Jarvises living in the Bartons and for most of that time they have provided a variety of services to the village community. There seem to have been two distinct Jarvis families who coincidentally followed similar paths during the nineteenth century.

Thomas Jarvis is understood to have been a 'woolcomber' when he purchased a cottage and meadow in Westcot Barton in 1791 and we believe that, by 1839, he was renting part of Manor Farm, Westcot Barton. Thomas's youngest son, Solomon Jarvis, inherited the cottage on his father's death in 1840 and, by the time of the 1851 census, he is recorded as carrying out a business as harness-maker, saddler and grocer from his premises in Fox Lane. He bought a house and land for £40 in 1860. It is likely that this property is what is now 12 Fox Lane.

Jenner Marshall, who built Westcote Barton Manor House and published 'Memorials of Westcott Barton' in 1870, tells us that Solomon was also a collar-maker. Another of Thomas' sons, William, was apparently a butcher at the time of his marriage in 1839.

In 1851, Solomon sold a plot of land in Fox Lane for £10 for a Primitive Methodist Chapel to be built on it, thus facilitating another kind of 'service'. By 1901 the cottage by the ford was owned by Solomon's son, Thomas.

Around the same time Thomas Jarvis, who was born in 1842 and was my great-grandfather, was also a saddler and harness-maker who came to Barton from Helmdon in Northamptonshire. He also lived in Fox Lane for a while then settled in North Street as a saddler where he continued this business until his death in 1919. We have a photograph of him (see below) standing outside the Saddlery resplendent in floor length white apron and sporting an extremely fine bushy white beard. Thomas was twice married and my grandfather, Robert, usually known as Bob, was the only child of his second marriage.

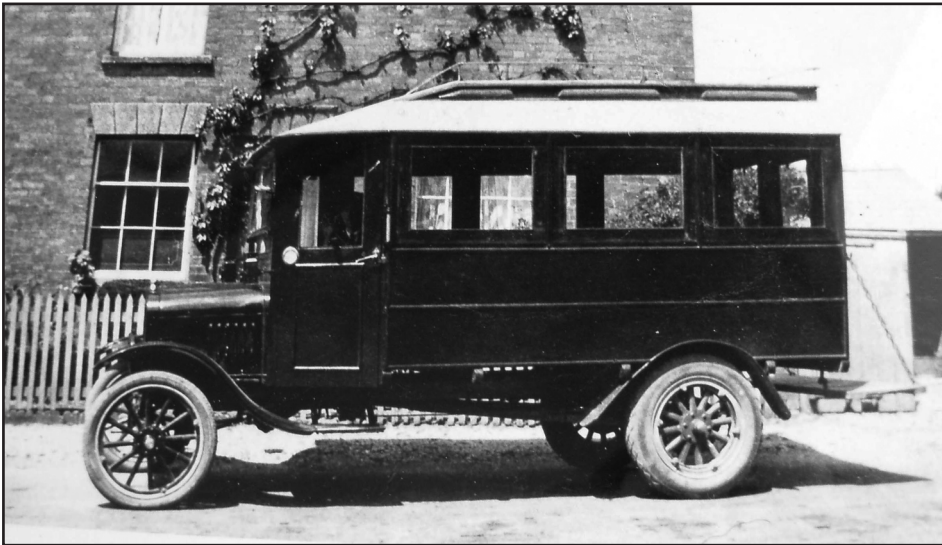


The Saddlery, North Street, Middle Barton

Following the First World War, when Bob was a young man, the world was changing in all sorts of ways, with horses giving way to the internal combustion engine. In the Bartons people still walked or cycled everywhere and walked to Heyford Railway station for journeys further afield.

There were few cars and little traffic. Bob was clearly not too keen on carrying on the harness making tradition and the business was taken over by Harry Bradshaw. Subsequently it became the village cobblers and shoe shop owned by Fred Bradshaw who constructed the renowned railway layout upstairs in what is now known as Saddlers Cottage.

Bob started up his garage business in 1922 where the Middle Barton Garage is now. He settled with his wife, Ethel, in the end of the terrace now occupied by the Middle Barton Garage and then, in the late 1920s, bought the house next door which is now 53, North Street. Hitherto this had housed Dr. Turner's surgery. Aubrey and Mary West moved into the vacated house, now part of the garage premises. In 1923, together with Aubrey West, Bob began a newspaper delivery service which continued until 1978 when it was sold to the Webb family.



One of the earliest Jarvis buses outside 53, North Street

There was great excitement when Bob ran his first bus. In 1922 he was the first Bus Operator in North Oxfordshire. The bus had benches down the sides and green canvas overhead. He took people from the Bartons to London in 1925 to visit the Wembley Exhibition. By today's standards we would consider it very uncomfortable but at that time the pleasure of a ride in the bus was tremendous.

He was still described in the early 1920s as a carrier; for a few pence he would take orders for items to be bought in Oxford or Banbury (on approval). As a carrier he occasionally undertook unusual commissions. In the 1930s he was given the job of taking a coffin to Palmers Green in London but the bus broke down resulting in him being too late for the funeral.


During the Second World War years the buses were used to take workers to the Northern Aluminium works in Banbury, on a three shift system, via Chipping Norton and Bloxham.

At the end of the war there was no fuel for private vehicles so the buses were popular for taking Darts, Cricket, Football and Bowls teams to matches. As soon as Derrick, my father, returned from his wartime service he began to be heavily involved in the business, followed by younger brother David. Derrick took over the management of the business in the early 1950s. At the same time he became heavily involved in village life. He was a keen sportsman and excelled at football, cricket and tennis. In India he had played football against Sir Denis Compton and he later played against Sir Bobby Charlton. He was a prime mover on the Playing Fields Committee, the forerunner of the Sports and Social Club of which he was invited to be President in his seventies. He also chaired the Parish Council for a time and was Chairman of the school governors during the 1970s.

After the cinema opened in Middle Barton Jarvis buses brought people from many of the surrounding villages, the fare including entrance to the cinema.

The Sunday School outing, previously by train, migrated to buses and the trips to Weymouth, Bognor Regis, Weston-super-Mare or Wicksteed Park were the highlight of many village children's lives. Three, four or even five coaches would set out very early in the morning and the Bartons would be deserted for the day. For many children and their parents this trip could be the only time they left the village as cars were still by no means common.

*Invoice for Sunday School
outing to Southsea
August 1948*

repairs, Petrol, Oils, etc.	Spares and Tyres.
R. JARVIS	
CARS FOR HIRE	
Phone: STEEPLE ASTON 243	
THE GARAGE, MIDDLE BARTON OXON.	
Mr. KIRBY.	
MIDDLE BARTON.	
16. 8. 1948.	
2-3237's 4.1.26 for buses to Southsea & Return.	£65 0 0
	



Part of the Jarvis fleet in the 1950s

From the 1950s onwards the Mothers' Union and Womens' Institute also went on Jarvis bus trips. Another development was the concept of the Mystery Tour, often including a fish and chip supper en route. The Mystery Tours usually took place on summer evenings and, for those without their own vehicle, they were a great opportunity to see the surrounding countryside; Bourton-on-the-Water, Chipping Campden and the Slaughters were particularly popular destinations as well as Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick.

Regular services ran to Banbury, mainly for shopping, and Oxford, to provide for office and shop workers. Any females from the Jarvis family who were on the bus acted as 'clippies' and collected the fares.

The mainstay of the business became the Schools contracts. Children were no longer expected to walk to Steeple Aston to school as they were in the 1920s. Jarvis buses took children to schools in Banbury, Chipping Norton, Steeple Aston and later collected American children to take them to the American school on the Heyford Air Force Base. Tudor Hall School, near Banbury also regularly chartered buses.

In 1959 the business of R.S Hall of Deddington was acquired which meant another three shift service to Northern Aluminium in Banbury (later Alcan) was needed from Deddington via Aynho and Croughton.

In the early 1960s my mother, Winifred, obtained her Public Service Vehicle licence, at a time when it was quite unusual to see a female driving a bus or coach. Mum drove the larger coaches occasionally when the demand meant we did not have enough drivers available but mostly she drove the minibus. This was used for bringing children from Sandford, Steeple Barton and Whistlow to Middle Barton School. It was also the means by which children at the local schools were provided with a hot meal at lunchtime. Meals were prepared at Steeple Aston school, loaded into special cans and collected by the minibus and taken to Upper Heyford, Somerton and Middle Barton schools where a fully kitted canteen was not viable. In the summer a Jarvis bus was also used to take locals, almost all ladies, potato picking.

As the cinema was reaching the end of its life, in the late 1960s and '70s, Bingo was becoming more popular and Jarvis buses collected aficionados several times a week to attend Bingo sessions in local Village Halls.

In the meantime the Newspaper delivery service continued. Bob and Ethel (Gramp and Gran) would be up before dawn to start work. Initially, in the 1920s Bob and Aubrey (known as Rock) had collected the newspapers from the train station at Heyford although later, in the 1950s, they were delivered by van.

In the late 1930s Derrick and Diana would cycle to Heyford station to collect the newspapers from the 6.30 a.m. train, delivering to Steeple Barton on the way home. The newspapers would need to be folded and sorted into the right order for each delivery run. My sisters and I would get up a little later and one of us would accompany Gramp in the car around Steeple Barton and Hopcroft Holt and back via South Street. Gramp would drop us off at the Holt to run round the houses there while he drove along to New Barn; he would then drop us by the Butler's cottage in the Abbey grounds. He would drive down to the Abbey while we ran through the woods to the other cottages and pick us up again. It was quite energetic! We would get back home at the garage to grab a quick breakfast before running for the school bus at 7.45 a.m. Gramp would drive round the Sandford and Ledwell routes a bit later before going home for a cooked breakfast. He continued well into his 70s despite suffering quite badly from sciatica.

The petrol pumps at the garage became more and more necessary as people became car owners. My sisters and I were pump attendants after school and at weekends.



*Carol Jarvis in her Brownie uniform
outside the petrol pumps in the late 1950s*

At that time in the 1960s four gallons of premium petrol cost 19 shillings and 11 pence - just less than £1! The garage also provided car servicing and, when they were introduced in the late 1950s, MOT tests, as well as maintaining the bus and coach fleet which ran to a dozen or so vehicles

In 1972, after fifty years of serving the community R Jarvis and Sons sold the coach business to Heyfordian Coaches, although the minibus was retained for the Middle Barton school run and the school meals delivery.

Another member of the Jarvis family, Diana, had married Peter Bauckham in 1951. In 1948 Peter had started a milk delivering service to the Bartons, Sandford, Ledwell, The Tews and Enstone. Together they developed a thriving business in the Bartons until selling up to the Webb family in 1962. I used to help with the milk round occasionally at weekends until I fell and cut my hand when carrying milk bottles to the Carpenters' Arms - I still carry the scar!



*Peter Bauckham with his milk float
in the 1950s*

Later David's wife, Diane Jarvis, became postwoman for the Bartons.

On selling the bus and coach business and subsequently the garage concern, Derrick began another career as a trainer and examiner for Driving Test Instructors, resulting in a number of local driving schools, although much of his time was spent in the Wellingborough, Corby and Kettering areas where unemployment was high and people were looking to start new careers.

My mother, Winifred, finally gave up the minibus in the late 1970s to work for the Health and Safety Executive in Oxford. She is now retired and still lives in Middle Barton.

Flint axe found near Leys Farm

Christine Edbury

One afternoon in October 1990, a near perfect flint axe head dating from about 4,000 years ago was found by Robert Knight whilst inspecting the crops in one of the fields near Leys Farm. As he did not know what it was, he took the axe to the County Museum in Woodstock, where it was identified by David Dawson, Assistant Curator. David Dawson dated the axe to the Neolithic period (2,000 BC). Neolithic simply means Neo (new) and lithic (stone).

The Neolithic people were the first of the farmers, settling in small groups and growing crops. Before that, the people were 'hunter/gatherers', always on the move to find food and shelter. So far, no remains of previous earlier people have been found in our area.

Flint is not found in our part of Oxfordshire, the nearest source being The Chilterns. However, David Dawson suggested that the flint used to make this tool was of very high quality, and may have come from the area around Ibstone Down, Wiltshire.

Ground and polished stone and flint was used to make tools for grinding, cutting, chopping and adzing. To make our axe, a large lump of flint would have been chipped into shape and then polished, using sand. Smaller flakes would then have been taken off the larger end to make a sharp edge.

The finished axe would then have been hafted (attached to a rough wooden handle) and bound into place, possibly with lengths of hide or leather.

The edge of our axe is still quite sharp – in fact the axe looks hardly used and may have been lost rather than discarded. The actual size of the axe is 22cm high and 7cm at the widest – the cutting edge.



Both sides of the axe

Photographs: Bartons' History Group Archive

*The axe,
kindly donated by
the Fleming family, and
currently on display
at
The Oxfordshire Museum,
Woodstock*



*Photographed
in March 2010
by Christine Edbury
by kind permission
of
The Oxfordshire Museum,
Woodstock*

In 1976 pieces of flint were found and recorded from the field near the fish ponds at Steeple Barton and it has been suggested that this could have been a flint-working site. A tiny broken arrowhead was also found in a field near the Leys Farm. The arrowhead is from the Bronze Age, slightly later in date than the axe. A similar, but broken, Neolithic axe head was found in the 1970s, just over the parish boundary near Kiddington. So we now know that our Barton ancestors have been inhabiting the area around Steeple Barton for a very long time.

Our Barton Neolithic ancestors buried their dead in the long barrow, the remains of which can be seen up near Hopcroft's Holt, on the right hand side, heading towards Oxford. It looks like a pile of stones on a small mound now, with a fir tree at each end. It is marked as a 'hoar stone' on maps.

In 1843, the Barton Abbey tenant farmer blew up the large limestone slabs which made up the barrow for road stone, scattering the now small stones across the field. Subsequently, Mr. H. Hall, the new owner of Barton Abbey, gathered up the stones and surrounded them with metal railings, which have since been removed.



*The remains of the long barrow as seen from the
Banbury to Oxford road,
just past Hopcrofts Holt on the right hand side
Photograph: Bartons' History Group Archive*

There were two hoar stones recorded as far back as 1210. The other large stone, to be found in the woods near Barton Abbey, and marked as a Hoar Stone on the maps, is not so easy to date.

Information from the Sites and Monuments Record, Oxfordshire County Council, County Archaeology, suggests that it might be part of a cromlech or dolmen – a portal grave. The remaining stone may have been the top or capstone. No dating evidence has been found around it. This, and the site near Hopcroft's Holt, has never been excavated.

The medieval field names such as Stanlow, Wistaneslawe (probably Whistlow), Langlawe, Nordlanglawe and Succelawe, are all evidence that there were more standing stones in the area - see 'British History On-Line'

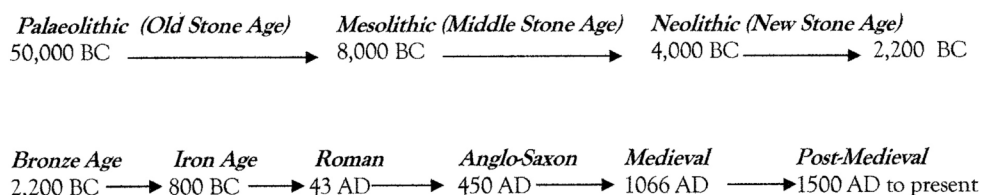
Bibliography:

Archaeological Journal, 1849, Vol. VI, p. 290.

'Demolition of Cromlech', 1841, An article by Potts (in his MSS, Banbury).

'Ruin of Druid altar', articles in Gardner's and Kelly's Directories.

British Archaeological Periods (approximate)



Other information on sites in our area may be found on the Ashmolean website: [www.Ashmolean.org/Research and Conservation/Antiquities/British and European Archaeology/Preserving and Enhancing Historic Oxfordshire/Site Information](http://www.Ashmolean.org/Research%20and%20Conservation/Antiquities/British%20and%20European%20Archaeology/Preserving%20and%20Enhancing%20Historic%20Oxfordshire/Site%20Information)

Postboxes from all reigns

Rosemary Wharton



Steeple Barton V/R box

Roadside letterboxes have been a feature of our towns and villages since 1852, when the novelist Anthony Trollope first pioneered the idea of the pillar box in the Channel Islands. Trollope ⁽¹⁾ was a Post Office Surveyor at the time. Initially, pillar boxes were first commissioned by each local post office for towns in their particular district, but by the late 1850s all letterboxes were standardised throughout the UK. As the postal service developed, three different types emerged and are still familiar to us today.

Pillar box: Introduced into towns in 1852.

Wall box: First installed in rural areas in 1857.

Lamp box: Introduced in 1896; originally attached to a lamppost, enabling people to post letters after dark; nowadays attached to any suitable pole.

(1) It is said that Trollope sometimes used information he read in 'dead letters' (ones which could not be delivered) as ideas for his novels.

The Bartons have no pillar boxes but we can claim the novelty of a postbox from every reign except Edward VIII (who abdicated). The first clue on a letterbox is the royal cipher.

Queen Victoria (VR)

Steeple Barton has an unsung treasure. Tucked into the wall just opposite Steeple Barton Vicarage is a Victorian wall box which is particularly rare because of its early design. This box is the second 'standard' design and was made around 1861 and there are only about 60 of this type still in use. Note the flap in the aperture to try to keep the rain out. Not totally successful, these flaps were discarded in later models. This box originally had a hood over the aperture and a triangular pediment on top as well, but they have long been broken and disappeared. More common are the boxes made during the 1870s and there are many of these in the villages around us. Ledwell for example has a beautifully situated Victorian wall box, but of a slightly later design.

King Edward VII (EVR)

This wall box is built into a purpose built brick pillar, at the Duns Tew turn on the Bicester/Enstone Rd. Comparing this with our small Victorian one, the most interesting feature is the size of the aperture for posting. Originally this would have been much smaller, but many apertures were modified when letters became larger. This is a good example of a box where the original aperture was cut away and the new casting fitted.



*Modified aperture EVR
Duns Tew turn*

Originally there was a box in the wall of Tollkeepers Cottage (facing Rayford Lane) and looking closely you can see where it used to be. It would be interesting to know when this was removed and whether it is the same box.

King George V (GR)

As the volume of post increased, letterboxes were made larger, as in the GR box in the wall of the private house at 67 North Street. This is where the village post office moved to when Mr George Kirby⁽²⁾ was made sub-postmaster in 1936 and the box remains in use today.



*GVR box
Enstone Road, Westcote Barton*



*George V box
North Street*

King George VI (GVI R)

Westcote Barton has a very large wall box from the reign of George VI. It is situated in the wall outside the church and has a swirly, decorative GVI R cipher dating from 1937. Here the crown is incorporated just above the cipher, unlike our GR box.

(2) The History Group has an interesting letter dated May 21st 1936 informing Mr G.H. Kirby of his appointment as sub-postmaster of Middle Barton. It also says that 'instructions have been given to Mr Irons to have the letterbox removed to its new position on the afternoon of June 4th.' Before this the post office was run by the Grimsley family at 21/22 North Street.

Queen Elizabeth (EIIR)

Middle Barton has two boxes from the present reign. The EIIR box on South Street is a typical lamp box of the era, but it has no makers name on it. The EIIR lamp box which had been at the corner of Hillside/Worton Road was transferred to the front of Middle Barton Stores in 1979 when the post-office⁽³⁾ moved here. Recently this box was replaced by the new 'bantam' lamp box, designed in 1999. With its large aperture, it can take even larger packages and this modern box is inscribed 'Royal Mail' rather than 'Post Office.' On Worton Road, you can also see the green 'holding' box used by our postmen to store mail.



*EIIR lamp box
South Street*



*EIIR 'bantam' lamp box
Middle Barton Stores*

(3) When Miss Ruth Kirby (daughter of George) retired as post-mistress, the Webb family took over the post-office within the village shop, now Middle Barton Stores.

So why do letterboxes merit such interest?

I believe they demonstrate a quirky roadside history that few people consider. Styles and shapes have changed over the years, as manufacturers tried to improve designs such as ease of posting and emptying; making the box rainproof etc. The main things to look out for are:

*** The monarch's cipher** - sometimes plain, sometimes beautifully ornate. But you may spot an 'anonymous box' - a Victorian box where the VR royal cipher and all references to the Post Office have been inadvertently omitted.

*** Post Office/Royal Mail**

Each box also depicts a variation on the following: 'Post Office', 'Letters', 'Letters only' and, for more recent boxes, 'Royal Mail'.

*** The aperture**

Early boxes had a flap over the aperture to stop rain getting in, but this was not wholly necessary and later designs incorporated a hood over the aperture, as seen in our Victorian box in Steeple Barton.

*** The collection plate**

This tells the times of the collections and also gives the box's unique number and postcode e.g. the box on South Street has an OX7 number (Chipping Norton sorting office) but our Victorian box in Steeple Barton has a OX25 number, so post collected here goes to the Bicester sorting office.

*** Keyhole, door, door pull**

As designs changed the position of the door changed to ensure that letters were not trapped in the bottom of the box. A door pull was added and the keyhole was given a protective covering.

*** Manufacturer's name**

Smith and Hawkes, Macham, Handyside, Allen and Carron are the common manufacturers and most boxes bear the manufacturer's name.

Further afield

There are many villages within a few miles of Middle Barton which still retain their Victorian wall boxes. Ledwell has already been mentioned and some others of the same era can be seen in villages⁽⁴⁾ close by. There seem to be far more Victorian wall boxes in the north of the county compared with the rest of Oxfordshire and the reason is uncertain. It could simply be that it was local policy to keep them, but it is interesting that many of them are located close to large historic houses.

Wootton

An interesting and very old 'non-standard' box can be seen in Wootton. The letter box in the wall of the village shop here is a rudimentary affair. It is wooden and roughly constructed with no royal cipher to date it – just a modern sign saying 'post box.' It has been in the wall of the shop since the mid-1800s and about 15 years ago the village protested at having it replaced by a 'proper' Royal Mail box. A photo taken in 1908 shows the box in the wall of the shop (although the door and windows have since been moved to their present position.)

This is what is commonly known as a 'carpenter's box.' It will have been made locally, probably by the local carpenter or other handyman.

Until 1908 the local sub-postmaster was responsible for providing a postbox at his own expense as they were not supplied by the Post Office from a central source. As a proper cast iron box would have cost around £5 to £10 he took the cheap option!



'Carpenters box' Wootton

(4) Steeple Aston, Middle Aston, Rousham, Caulcott, Over Worton, Nether Worton, Shipton-on-Cherwell, Heythrop, Radford ... plus many others.

Banbury

Outside the town hall is a beautiful fluted Victorian pillar box with a vertical aperture. This is a rare box dating from 1856 and as a nearby plaque says, it has been 'in daily use in Banbury since 1857.' Vertical apertures did not last long as the Post Office decided that horizontal apertures made it less easy for thieves to pinch the letters.



Victorian pillar box in Banbury

Oxford

(i) **Park Town** has an example of the most celebrated type of Victorian pillar box known as a 'Penfold' after its designer J.W. Penfold. This elegant, hexagonal box topped by Acanthus leaves was produced in 1866. There are many remaining around the country.

(ii) There are **Victorian wall boxes** dotted around Oxford, but they are almost twice the size of our village box and designed to cope with the larger volume of mail in towns.

(iii) **78, Banbury Road.** The pillar box here was installed especially for Sir James Murray, the first Editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, who lived here from 1885-1915. He worked in his 'scriptorium' in the garden and relied on a team of people all over Britain to research words for him. There is a 'blue plaque' on the wall next to the box.



Balliol College, Oxford

(iv) **Oxford Colleges** Outside some of the Oxford Colleges, there are some mysterious wall boxes, which have no aperture! They are devoid of information and just have a keyhole and a doorpull. These boxes are designed to allow letters to be posted inside the porter's lodge, but the postman can unlock them from the road. They are barely noticed unless you are looking for them, but spot them at Balliol, Queen's or All Souls amongst others.

To preserve the history of our postal service, a small group of enthusiasts set up the 'Letterbox Study Group' several years ago. The Group has grown and it aims to locate, survey and classify every letterbox in Britain and even now 'unknown' boxes are reported with great excitement! It's something that can be taken as seriously or as light-heartedly as you like, but I find that spotting the changing styles and designs of letterboxes just adds another interest to the routine of daily life.

Bibliography

'The Letter Box' Jean Young Farugia (1969) published Centaur Press

'Old Letter Boxes' Martin Robinson (2000) Shire Publications

ISBN 0-7478-0446-X

'The Letterbox Study Group' www.lbsg.org.

Looking backwards... ...and forwards

Chris Jones

This short article covers two additions to the Parish Church and churchyard of St. Mary-the-Virgin in Steeple Barton which have been made since the first Bartons' History Group leaflet on Steeple Barton Church was published in 1996.



*Parish Church of St. Mary-the-Virgin
Steeple Barton*

These additions were made to celebrate the arrival of the new Millennium. A new small, stained glass window (the “Millennium window” as it is now called) was installed in the upper south-west window of the Church and a yew tree was planted in the churchyard.

The Millennium window

Steeple Barton Church has some excellent examples of stained glass – the altar window commemorating the contribution of the Hall family and the south-east windows depicting the four apostles.



*Matthew and Mark
window*



*Luke and John
window*

As a celebration of the new Millennium an appeal was launched to install an example of 21st century stained glass and generous contributions were made by Steeple Barton Parish Council and many individuals from within the area and from further afield. Peter Archer was commissioned to suggest a design which would incorporate lilies – the emblem of St. Mary after whom the Church is named.

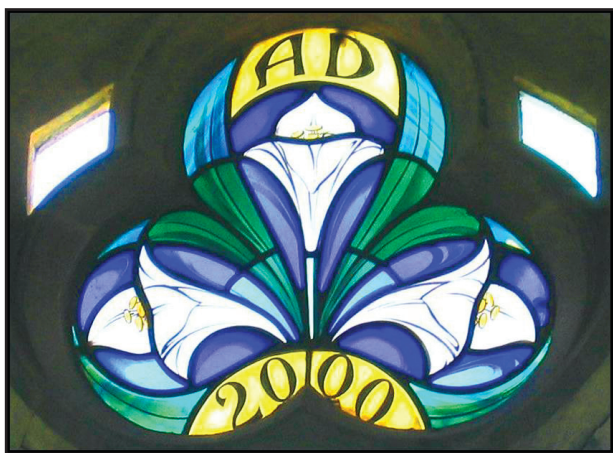
*Peter Archer's design
for the Millennium window*



The window was made in Oxford and installed as a replacement for some panes of plain glass in the existing upper south-west window (just on the left as you enter the Church).



Upper section of the south-west window



Detail of the Millennium window

The cost of the window was £692 and the project was overseen by Mr. Peter Watts (who also installed a polycarbonate protective cover to the window).

The window was dedicated by the Vicar, Rev'd Graeme Arthur, at the 11 a.m. service on 19th November, 2000 - since then it has received many positive comments.

The Millennium Yew

In October 1996, The Conservation foundation launched its tree-planting initiative, “Yews for the Millennium”. The project, launched by the Bishop of London and the Archbishop of York and supported by Landis and Gyr (an “eco-friendly” international manufacturing company), involved possibly the largest propagation programme from ancient yews ever undertaken in the UK and certainly the furthest reaching initiative involving yews, Britain’s longest living species. Parishes, schools, local groups and individuals were invited to take up the free offer of a young yew tree which had been propagated from an ancient yew estimated to be at least 2,000 years old. Some yews have been found to be 5,000 years old making them the longest living tree in Europe!

Known as the “Tree of Life” to the Celts, yews have stood within the lych gate of many parish churches for centuries - their toxicity to animals has helped to keep out stray animals. They grow in an unusual way – several stems gradually form round the main trunk and these in time unite and the original trunk rots away leaving a hollow centre. The Vikings used nails of yew in their long-boats and some bows in medieval times were made of yew. By the eighteenth century yew was much sought after for making furniture.

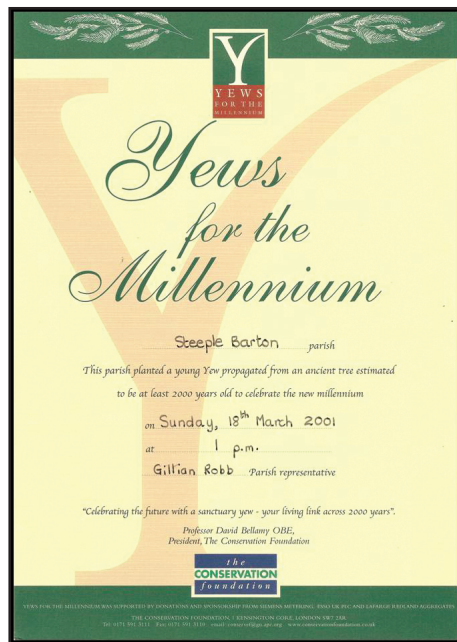
To celebrate the new Millennium, Steeple Barton Parochial Church Council accepted the offer of one of these young trees and Mrs. Gillian Robb, a member of the Council at the time, collected the seedling from Dorchester Abbey. After being nurtured in its pot for almost a year, it was planted within a couple of metres of the gate, just to the right of the path leading to the porch, on 18th March 2001.



*Gillian Robb
with the
Millennium Yew*



The original seedling was 5" high. It was initially rather slow to develop but, 10 years later, it has now matured to a significant young tree. It is now nearly 6 feet high!



*The Millennium Yew
Steeple Barton Churchyard March 2009*



Middle Barton Mission Band 1910

*Back: Fred Reeves, Will Stewart, Solomon Stewart (from Canada), Jim Castle, Alfred Reeves (with drum), Ken Castle, Charlie Hawtin, Bert Stewart, Horace Castle, Teddy Matthews,
Seated: Archie Reeves, George Kirby*



*1920s
Ken Castle with the
Sunday School*

*1930s Sunday School outing
Back: Billy Baker, Jack Smith,
Ethel Stewart, Harry Bassett
Front: George Kirby*



The Methodist Chapel

150 years on

Adapted from Audrey Martin's notes (1999)

In September 2010, the Methodist Chapel in The Dock, Middle Barton, celebrated its 150th anniversary.

A chapel in The Bartons was first recorded in 1814. By 1851 there were two chapels – the **Wesleyan Methodist** (in Worton Road) and the **Primitive Methodist**. It is believed that the latter may have been a building in Westcote Barton in the drive to Manor Farm but no documentary evidence has been found. Shortly after the 1851 census was taken, Solomon Jarvis sold a plot of land in Fox Lane for £10 to the Chapel Trustees and a Chapel was built. Nine years later the Chapel was sold back to Solomon Jarvis and converted into a house (now 10, Fox Lane). In the 1851 religious census, the **Primitive Methodist Chapel** was said to have an average Sunday attendance of 100, both in the afternoon and the evening. There was an additional comment:

'For want of room we have upwards of 40 outside.'

In 1860 a new **Primitive Methodist Chapel** was built in The Dock. It is still in use today, one of the few remaining Methodist Churches in North Oxfordshire. Records have been kept giving details of the purchase in 1860 by the Chapel Trustees of two cottages and a plot of land for £130. The cottages were let to tenants (as two cottages until 1943 and then as a single cottage until 1953) - after that they were demolished. No records, however, have been found about the actual building of the Chapel.

William Wing, who was involved in many village activities and normally well-informed, had commented about the **Wesleyan Chapel** in his book *Annals of Steeple Barton and Westcot Barton* (1866):

*“There is, however, a chapel not so unpleasant to the eye, and equally commodious, erected in 1860 in the very heart of Middle Barton by the **Primitive Methodist** body. I wished to give some detailed account of this chapel and society, and their transactions at Barton, but am unable to do so.”*

After 1932, when Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists joined together and formed the Methodist Church, the Wesleyan chapel in Worton Road was closed and, after the war, it was converted into a house. Not until 1984, was the remaining (Primitive) Methodist Chapel in The Dock modernised. The pews were replaced by chairs and there is now a carpet on the floor.



Interior of the Methodist Chapel in the Dock pre-modernisation

The entrance doors used to lead into a small lobby with doors on either side into the chapel - between the doors facing into the chapel there was a cupboard.

Modernisation in 1984 showing new interior wall with entrance lobby and separate room and kitchen



The text above the pulpit:

“O GIVE THANKS UNTO THE LORD FOR HE IS GOOD”

has gone but the tablets on the wall remain.



Interior of the Chapel during renovation

The tablets are dedicated to Hilare, who was a daughter of Henry and Catherine Hall at the local ‘big house’ (Barton Abbey) and her husband, John de Burgh Rochfort. The Rochforts were particularly active in chapel life and he was a preacher, but other members of the Hall family gave support to chapel as well as to the church.

Since the renovation, the Chapel has continued to be used for many social functions, including the hosting of the weekly “Little Tiddlers” group for mums and very young children as well as for regular Sunday worship.



In 2010, the Chapel celebrated its 150th anniversary with a special weekday service, a display of photographs and material from the Bartons’ History Group archives and a Harvest Festival at the weekend.

The Methodist Circuit Choir at the 150th anniversary service in the Chapel



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