

PENNY STAMP COTTAGE

No 12 The Green, Barby



Formerly Barby's First Post Office

Barby Local History Group

2021



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Penny Stamp Cottage

For convenience the modern road names have been used, and the present name of the cottage.

Sources are from Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO), The National Archives (TNA), Barby Parish Registers, and documents and photographs in the archive of Barby Local History Group (BLHG).

Introduction

Penny Stamp Cottage is situated on the east side of The Green overlooking the allotments in the centre. It is constructed of brick and slate, and was built in the middle of the nineteenth century. The coming of the railway to Rugby in 1837 would have enabled the easy transport of Welsh slate which was extensively used on new housing, being much more durable than thatch.

Deeds See Appendix 2 for a summary of these

Three deeds have been handed down relating to the original property:

1. A settlement after marriage between William Bassett and Thomas Pittom dated 4 December 1798. This refers to a Bargain and Sale dated 3 & 4 December 1798 between the two men (not extant).

2. A mortgage indenture dated 16 January 1845 between William Bassett and George Victor Hefford.

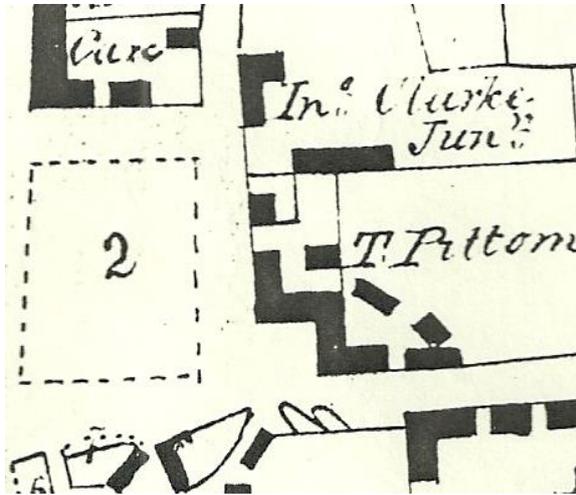
3. Another of 7 April 1854 between John Salisbury and Zachariah Foster.

There is also a note dated 26 September 1857 attached to the last document whereby Thomas Hopkins takes over the mortgage with Foster. It refers to the earlier indenture of mortgage of 7 April 1854 (Deed 3).

These deeds give a potted family tree for the Bassetts and the later occupants, the Salisburys, so are valuable for property and family history, but not always easy to interpret. (See Family Tree at Appendix 1)

Before Penny Stamp Cottage and the Post Office

The earliest map of the village is that for the Enclosure of the Open Fields in 1778. (NRO Map 5082).

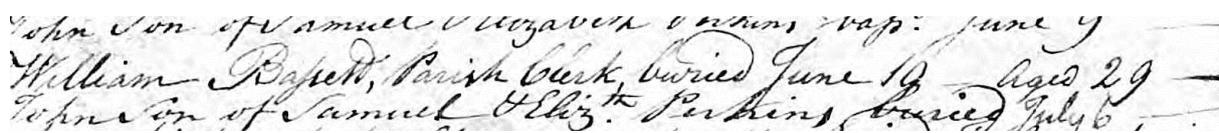


The portion here shows The Green at centre left marked "2", and the little complex of cottages and workshops which contain the site of Penny Stamp at centre right. Pinfold House belonged to John Clarke junior. Thomas Pittom was the owner of the cottages and workshops to the rear and fronting Rectory Lane. No ownership is given for the premises, but from its surviving deeds it belonged to the Bassetts who were for several generations carpenters and joiners.

In the settlement after marriage dated 4 December 1798 (Deed 1), **William Bassett**, who was then the owner of the whole complex on the Penny Stamp site, agreed for a nominal amount of money with Thomas Pittom¹, who owned the premises to the rear and fronting Rectory Lane, that Pittom could buy his property provided that William and his wife Mary, then after their deaths his children, could continue to have use of the cottages. Without the Indenture of Lease and Release referred to, it is impossible to say whether only a token payment was being made giving Pittom the property as security. William's elder son Joseph was to have use of William's own house, his only daughter Hannah the little cottage adjoining to the south, and his second son Thomas the cottage abutting which was divided into two dwellings, all probably very similar to the layout on the later 1840 map. The forerunner of Penny Stamp must have been a small cottage as no Bassett appears on the Window Tax List of 1752 (BLHG D1/67) which lists those owners with seven windows or more who were liable for the tax.

¹ For more about the Pittom family in Barby, see the article on our website at www.barbylhg.org.uk

William's father Thomas as the only son had inherited the property by the will of his own father Joseph (the will does not seem to have been proved), and William in turn again as the only surviving son inherited from his intestate father. All three men were described as carpenters and joiners (Deed 1). William died in 1799 aged only 29, and is named in the parish register as the Parish Clerk (entry below), the settlement must have been made to ensure his wife and children had some security, so he may already have been gravely ill when he signed the agreement six months before his death.



*John son of Samuel & Elizabeth Perkins, bapt. June 9
William Bassett, Parish Clerk, buried June 19, aged 29
John son of Samuel & Elizabeth Perkins, buried July 6.*

In 1808 his widow Mary married James Salisbury, another carpenter, who died in 1831. William and Mary's eldest son Joseph Bassett had died intestate in 1824, leaving his son, another William, as his heir (Deed 2). The Family Tree (Appendix 1) shows how comparatively young at death many of these men were, no doubt the inhalation of sawdust during their work as carpenters had much to do with this.

The Oakley Survey of 1840

This is the earliest detailed map of Barby which shows every property and piece of land in the parish, its owner and occupier. It was drawn up to assess the inhabitants for payment of rates towards the Workhouse in Rugby under the New Poor Law Act of 1834, but it does not seem to have been used. The accompanying schedule gives brief details of the plot (or field name) and any buildings, and if there were any business premises attached. North is to the right, dwellings are in pink, outbuildings are plain (NRO Map 4418 & ZA1431).

Plot No 456 refers to the site of Penny Stamp, described as "House, carpenters shop, outbuilding, yard & garden" measuring 14 perches, a decent size (there were 160 perches in an acre). The garden lies behind No 455. The premises were owned by **Mary Salsbury** and occupied by her son **John**. The village pound or pincfold which was used to pen stray animals is shown at No 455, it also appears unnamed on the enclosure map, separate from Penny Stamp. Pincfold House is the large property on the right of the map, owned and occupied by William Barker.

From this map, it can be seen that the footprint of the house is different from the later



one of 1914, suggesting that it was of cob or brick and thatch like its neighbours. The present house extends further north towards the pinfold. From the photograph of 1910 included later, it seems that half the old cottage was left to become the later Post Office, and the new house built abutting it.

The 1841 census records the occupants as Mary Saulsbury (sic) aged 70, John Saulsbury carpenter aged 30, James Saulsbury also a carpenter aged 30, Mary 30, and children Susan 8 and James 3. No relationships or birthplaces are given in this census, and adult ages are rounded down to the nearest five years. The parish registers confirm that the younger Mary was John's wife (he married Mary Grant in 1831), and the children were theirs, the older Mary his mother. John died in December 1844 "aged 37", James Saulsbury was his cousin. John's wife married again in 1850, her second husband was the widowed Richard Salisbury, a kinsman of her first.

Nos 461 & 462 adjacent to Penny Stamp were both owned by John Salisbury, a mason, occupied by Joseph Haddon and William Cleaver respectively, and No 463 occupied by William Salisbury was owned by another Mary Salisbury, probably William's mother. John Salisbury the schoolmaster lived on Rectory Lane in No 468 owned by Thomas Pittom, so there was quite a little group of Salisburys connected to that complex.

William b 1820, the son of Joseph Bassett, was entitled to the "remainder" in the property, that is, the interest in it which would have been his father's, and entered into a mortgage for £14 with George Valentine Hefford of Rugby, gentleman, in 1845 (Deed 2). Hefford became Rugby's Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths. Was this money raised to pay off Mary Salisbury for her interest in the property and sell it as John Salisbury is listed as the owner/occupier in the Tithe apportionment of that

year? This is not her son John who was living there in 1841 as he had died in 1844. At some time Thomas Pittom or his heirs must also have relinquished their entitlement to the property, perhaps some of the £14 was for this?

It is difficult to match up houses and occupants in the 1851 census as the enumerator doesn't always seem to have written up the schedules in house order, but John Salisbury, schoolmaster, was listed next door to William Barker who lived at Pinfold House. Deed 3 however throws light on this. It is a mortgage indenture of 1854 between John Salisbury, Barby's schoolmaster, and Zachariah Foster of Barby, farmer, for £120. From the census John was born in West Haddon in 1807, although his parents Thomas and Charlotte came from Barby. It is probable that John borrowed this considerably increased sum to pay for the building of the new cottage. He may well have bought the property from William Basset junior in 1845 as he is listed as the owner/occupier in the Tithe schedule later that year.

The 1861 census doesn't give exact addresses, and the schedule numbers again do not always follow the houses consecutively, but we have sufficient information to piece together the occupants of this little corner of Barby, although sadly not the owners. Penny Stamp was occupied by Thomas Hopkins. His entry follows that for Samuel Barker; he inherited Pinfold House from his father William who died in 1856. William Cleaver is still a neighbour, now 81 years old, and an unmarried carpenter James Salisbury, now aged 55 born in Barby, and lodging next door with widowed Hannah Roberts and her son William, could be the man living with John and Mary in 1841. Hannah Roberts was the Bassett daughter who had the use of the little cottage next door to Penny Stamp, she had married William Roberts in 1831. John Salisbury schoolmaster is a few houses away, so no longer at Penny Stamp.

Thomas Hopkins appears also in the 1851 census, so it is likely he bought the premises from John Salisbury the schoolmaster. He must have been renting the property at first, but appears to have bought it in 1857 from the note attached to Deed 3 in which he takes on the £120 mortgage with Zachariah Foster entered into by John Salisbury. In 1861 he was a wheelwright aged 51, born in Crick, and father of George who later became postmaster. A few houses away on the north side of The Green, next door to the Black Horse public house run by Christianna Woodfield,

lived James Roddis, baker and grocer, who became Barby's first postmaster around 1873. It is possible he had the house at No 20 The Green rebuilt as the bricks and lintels over the windows are very similar to those at the side rear of Penny Stamp. Two of James Roddis's daughters married into the Hopkins and the Woodfields so the families would have been close. There is a gravestone in memory of James and his wife Harriet on the left near the northern churchyard gate by the War Memorial.

The Post Office 1874-1910

The establishment of a Post Office enabled even small villages like Barby to keep up with the increased volume of letters generated by the Penny Post of 1840, aided by better literacy among the general population and speedier delivery by train. The postmaster was a position of responsibility.

The first mention of a Post Office in the village is in Tait's Rugby Almanac of 1874, **James RODDIS snr** (1805-1887) the Postmaster. The building which housed the early Post Office is not known, maybe Roddis's house. However in an 1880 directory the premises of **George HOPKINS** (1837-1901), a local builder and Roddis's son-in-law, are listed as Shop & Post Office; in the 1881 census the shop is a grocer's.



(BLHG P1775 CD3)

George and Sarah lived in the cottage now known as Penny Stamp Cottage, and he used the workshops and outbuildings in the course of his trade. There had long been carpenters on the site as we have seen. The couple appear above with their children (l-r) Frank, Lottie, Walter, Harriet and Emily, taken about 1883 (*photo courtesy of Louise Haywood*).



George with some of his workforce c1890 (BLHG P1771 Groups)

George built the terrace of houses in Rugby Road, Barby, locally known as Shakespeare Terrace (below in 1999) which were completed c1899.



(BLHG P04/24 Rugby Road)

He also built houses in Rugby, the picture below shows him with his workmen in Bath Street in the 1890s.



(BLHG P1772 Groups)

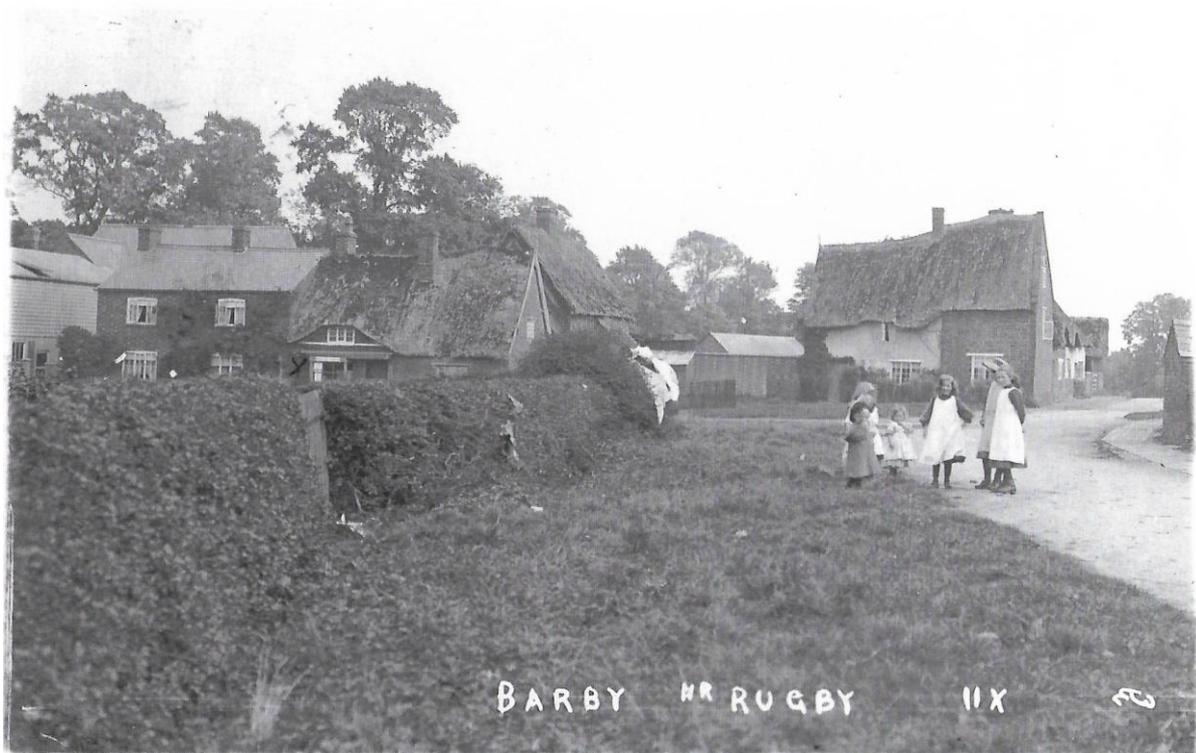
BARBY.
SCHOLASTIC APPOINTMENT.—Mr Percy R Andrews, son of Mrs Andrews, of the Arnold Arms, and the late Superintendent Andrews, sailed this week for Ithaca, Greece, where he is appointed assistant master at a college. Until recently Mr Andrews has been a master at Southdown College, Eastbourne.
OBITUARY.—By the death of Mrs Hopkins the village has lost one of its oldest and most respected inhabitants. The end came rather suddenly, although she had not been in very good health for some time. She was the widow of the late Mr George Hopkins, who predeceased her some nine or ten years. The deceased has kept the post office for about 20 years. Her son, Mr Walter Hopkins, had a builder's and contractor's business at Barby and Rugby until a few years ago, when he emigrated to Canada, in which country the late Mrs Hopkins has another son and daughter. The funeral took place on Wednesday afternoon.

George appears as Postmaster in local trade directories for the next few years until his death in 1901, when the position was taken over by his widow **Sarah Ann HOPKINS nee RODDIS** who died in 1910. A short obituary appeared in the Rugby Advertiser of 24 September 1910 (left). The graves of her and George, and his parents Thomas and Temperance Hopkins are in the southern part of the churchyard abutting the Village Hall, under the old yew tree there.

Frank HARRIS was sub-postmaster in the 1911 census, he was born in Somerset, his wife was Emily Hopkins, daughter of George and Sarah. They were newly married and had a baby daughter. Frank was a carpenter and joiner but not self

employed, so presumably his wife ran the shop and post office while he was out at work.

Two views some 15 years apart



(BLHG P1744 Village Centre)

This postcard looking across The Green was taken by Edgar Waterman of Coventry and dates from c1910. It shows Penny Stamp with the Post Office and an adjoining cottage on its right and another behind it, much as on the 1840 map. Note the washing drying on the hedge. The white building next door on the site of the pound is the Men's Reading Room set up by the Rector Canon Mitchison as a place for men to meet and read the papers instead of frequenting the public houses. At this time it formed part of the outbuildings of Penny Stamp.



(BLHG P2/095 Village Centre)

This postcard taken in the 1920s by Victor Long of Rugby, a prolific photographer, shows the cottages on the corner of The Green, later demolished. At this time they were all owned by Thomas Pittom of Ashleigh House Farm in Ware Road, those to the right appear to have been newly thatched. The cottage on the side of the Post Office in the previous view has been knocked down. The cottage on the left above is on what is now the garden of Penny Stamp Cottage. The open piece of ground on the corner is still there to this day.

Construction of the Present Cottage

The front of the present building has seen a number of changes in its lifetime, and there have been many additions to the rear of the building itself. Abutting the rear boundary is a small old outbuilding with a fireplace, at present being restored to its original two storeys. It would have formed part of the carpenter's/builder's workshops. The building which was the Reading Room later became part of the Pinfold House complex, and is now incorporated into Pinfold West, No 14 The Green.

The cottage has a base of Northamptonshire stone along half its length from between the two downstairs windows as far as the door, and the bricks around and above this window are different from those in the rest of the front. This band of stone acted as a foundation for the cob walls of the earlier cottage, although it seems the cob was replaced by brick sometime in the cottage's life.



There is a distinct vertical line in the brickwork in the centre of the front, up as far as the start of the upstairs, where the brick courses have not been bonded together, so it seems that rather than rebuilding the whole, the downstairs front wall of brick and stone of the old cottage was left, and the new building erected beside and over it. The difference in the bricks can be seen in the photos on the following page, changing four courses above the window.

The bricks from both builds are handmade, and may have come from the brickyard off the Bridle Path in Castle Mound Field, owned by Nathaniel Wiggins of Manor Farm. They are laid in alternate rows of headers (the ends) and stretchers (the sides) known as Flemish Bond, the headers in the new build forming a distinct pattern in the brickwork owing to their different colour from the stretchers, and the mortar is in a very thin layer. This can be seen in other older brick houses in Barby, Ashleigh House in Ware Road, known to have been built c1820, The Firs next to the Post Office, and the now demolished Manor Farm owned by Wiggins himself. All these houses were very similar in design to one another, and of course much larger than the cottage. The older bricks are thinner at Penny Stamp than the later ones which is why the lower courses are not in alignment.



Left: Old and new bricks with the unbonded line showing clearly. The roof would have been much like the cottage next door which became the Post Office and can be seen in the postcard of 1910. It was raised from its former level to match the new build and to give a firm base for the rafters.



The door, which measures 86cmW x 176cmH (34ins x 5ft 10ins) and opens straight into the room behind, is noticeably wider, lower and more recessed than later in the 19th century. The current owner had the present door made to measure as it was not a conventional size. The curved shape of the bricks above matches those of the windows in the later photos of the 1930s and 1960s, but the doorway's dimensions could well be those in the original cottage. The ceilings are very low in the room behind the door despite the floor being lowered to give extra headroom. The ceilings in the "new" build to the north are a little higher. The staircase, not the original, rises from the back room beyond the door, against the dividing wall, and is steep and narrow.

The front windows were originally made up of small panes in three panels with an opening casement in the middle like many farm and village cottages of this period.

The door at the side is in a later extension as can be seen from the photo below. Here the new bricks in English Bond (all stretchers) have been bonded to the existing wall by cutting the courses in as the new bricks are so much deeper than the old ones. The lintel as has been remarked previously is similar but less ornate than those at No 20 The Green, and may date from the same period as that house. In view of the family connections between the Roddises and Hopkins in the 1870s it is feasible that No 20 and the rear extension to Penny Stamp were built at around the same time.



Valuation Survey 1914-15

This was the next complete survey of Barby's properties, with a map using the 1901 Ordnance Survey maps, and pre-printed field books in which the surveyor entered details of each property and every piece of land. It was to be used to assess the improvement in value of properties once public amenities had been updated, but was never used for tax purposes. The maps however were used to record some changes in ownership up to the 1950s. The properties are outlined in various colours, and the numbers written in red.

Below is the portion of the Valuation Map relating to the Post Office. It is interesting to compare the footprint of this map with the almost contemporaneous postcards of 1910 and 1920. (TNA IR126/5/125 & 191).



The Post Office, No 41, was occupied by Frank Harris, and owned by National Deposit. The field book has notes about the property, it had been taken into possession by National Deposit in December 1908. "The previous owner purchased in 1900 for £725, up for sale 17 November 1913, no sale". We think National Deposit was a building/friendly society, but the owner who bought in 1900 is unfortunately not named. Whoever it was did not keep up the mortgage payments and the property was repossessed although the postmistress/master continued to live there.

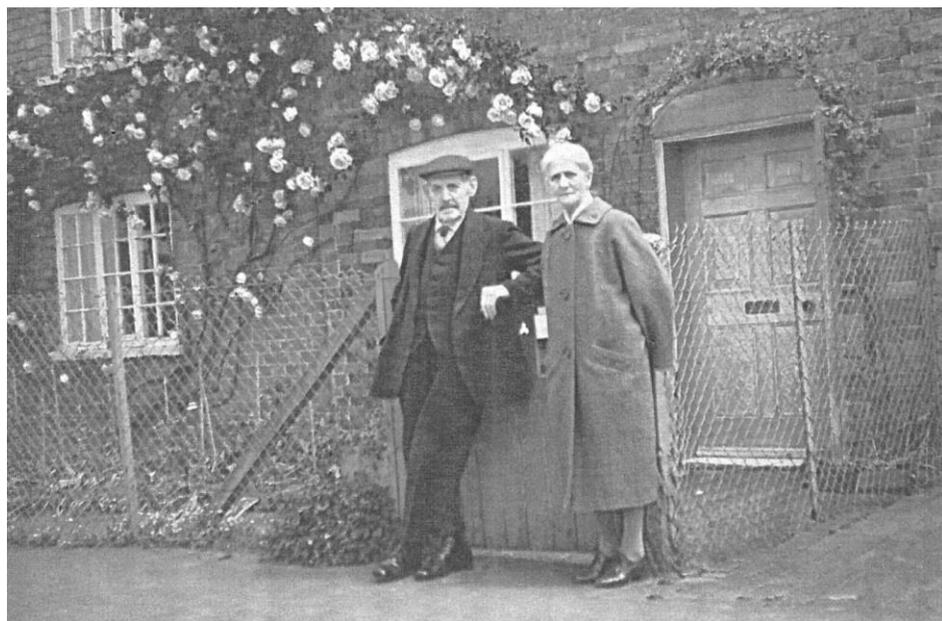
This is very ambiguous as no names are mentioned. The Rector Rev Mitchison had bought the houses in Shakespeare Terrace from George Hopkins in 1900, so perhaps George had overstretched himself and had sold his own house too, very likely to a family member as his widow continued to live there. His son Walter took over the business after the death of his father, so he may have bought the house. He emigrated to Canada shortly afterwards as is noted in his mother's obituary, maybe the reason for the default on the mortgage. The Rector had been using part of the workshops at Penny Stamp in 1908 as the Men's Reading Room, adjacent to Pinfold House. The schoolchildren transferred there early in 1909 for about three months because of building works at the school, the log book reports that there was no heating and it was so cold that the children sat in their coats and scarves.

The Post Office and shop were housed in what from the postcard of 1910 appears to be a cottage to the south of Penny Stamp, almost certainly part of the previous cottage. It had been renovated and the roof raised and covered with corrugated iron by the 1930s (below), maybe when the little cottage to the right of it was demolished. The pink Albertine rose which clothes the front was a big feature of the house until very recent times.



Post Office and shop in the 1930s (BLHG P17/013)

Last Days of the Post Office



(BLHG P02/067 Village centre)

Tom Mason (1888-1972), shown above with his half-sister Elizabeth Flavel in the early 1960s, was appointed postman in 1904 under Sarah Ann Hopkins when he was 16. The mail was then delivered by horse and cart from Rugby to Kilsby, where he collected it. He was appointed sub-postmaster fourteen years later in 1918, continuing in that role until his retirement in 1965. He was a blacksmith by trade, but delivered the post round the village while Elizabeth took care of the shop. He bought the house at some time during his tenure, the exact date is not known.

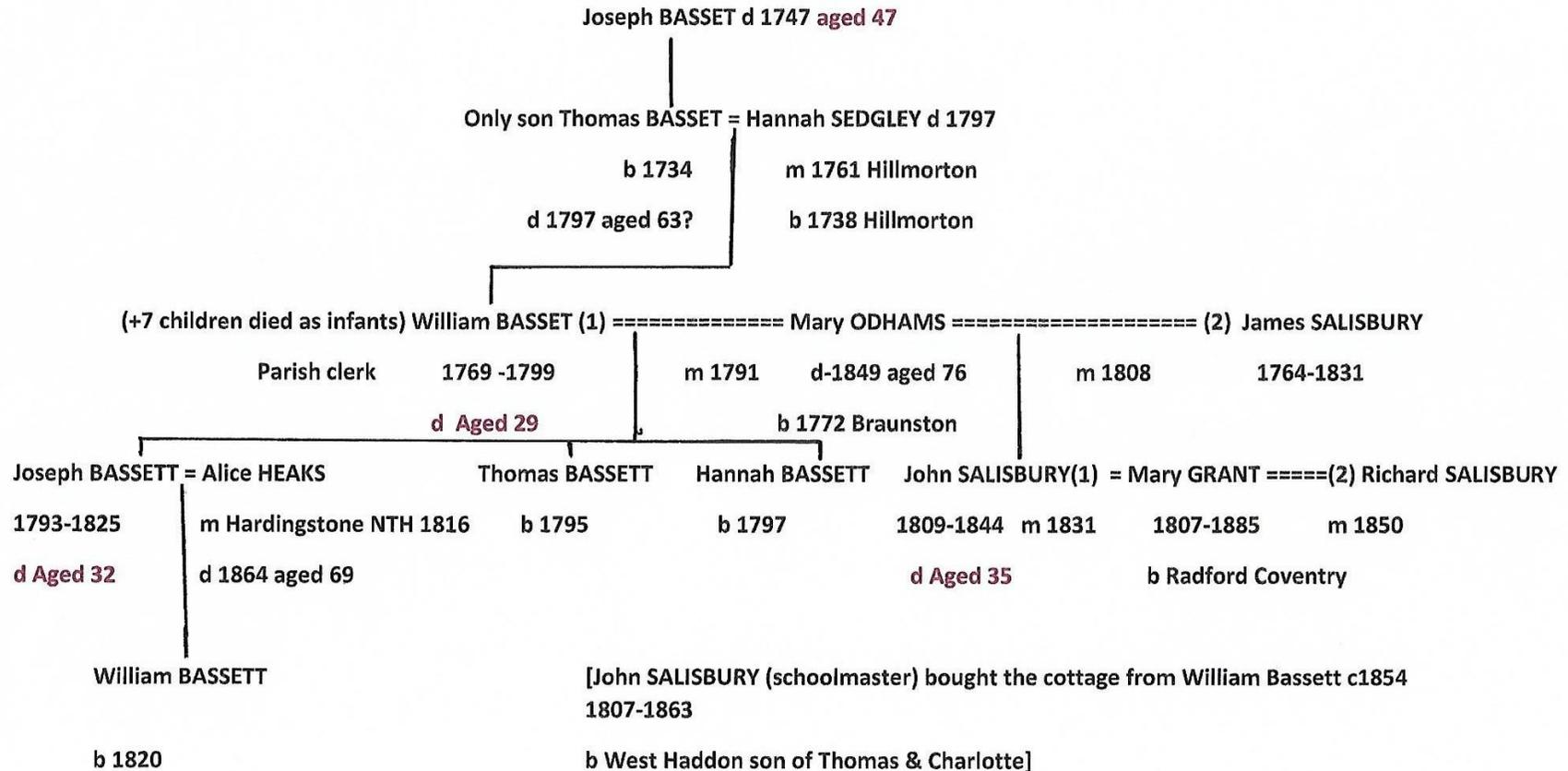
After Tom's retirement from the Post Office, he continued to live in the cottage until his death in 1972. Meanwhile he still carried on a bit of blacksmithing in the workshops behind the houses to the north of The Green. Numbers 3 & 5 Pittoms Lane now occupy the site.

After Tom's death, Penny Stamp was bought by Bob and Elsie Frankton, who ran the new Post Office and Garage in Rugby Road. They also bought and sold antiques which they stored and displayed in the old post office. It was later occupied by their daughter Pat and her husband. Pat continued to live in Penny Stamp until January 1996 when she sold it to the current owner Jan Taffs. It was she who gave it its present name in honour of its connection with the Post Office.

FAMILY TREE OF BASSETT AND SALISBURY RELATING TO PREMISES OF PENNY STAMP COTTAGE

Compiled from the existing deeds, Barby parish registers and Ancestry

All events at Barby unless otherwise stated



APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

**Abstracts of the existing deeds of Penny Stamp Cottage, 12 The Green,
given to owner Jan Taffs by Henry Flavel, nephew of Tom Mason.**

Deeds

Three surviving deeds have been handed down from the original property:

1. A settlement after marriage of 1798 between William Bassett and Thomas Pittom.
2. A mortgage indenture of 1845 between William Bassett and George Victor Hefford.
3. Another of 1854 between John Salisbury and Zachariah Foster.

There is also a note on the last document dated 26 September 1857 whereby Thomas Hopkins takes up the mortgage with Foster. It refers to the earlier indenture of mortgage of 7 April 1854.

These deeds give a potted family tree for the Bassetts and the later occupants, the Salisburys, so are valuable for property and family history.

Deed 1

4 December 1798

Settlement after marriage of Premises at Barby between Mr William BASSETT and Mr Thomas PITTOM.

Indenture between

1. **William BASSETT** of Barby, carpenter and joiner, only son of THOMAS BASSETT, late of Barby, carpenter & Joiner deceased, who was the only son and devisee in fee named in Last Will and Testament of JOSEPH BASSETT carpenter and joiner deceased

2. Thomas PITTAM (sic) of Barby yeoman

Refers to an Indenture of Bargain and Sale of the previous day between them.

In consideration of payment of ten shillings from TP, WB will sell to TP(subject to the conditions below) the house, shop and garden wherein he dwells, also the small cottage adjoining on the south side, once in occupation of JOHN RADBOURNE, now ALICE SALISBURY widow, which by the will of JOSEPH BASSETT passed to THOMAS BASSETT (died intestate), then to him, WB as his only son. Also the cottage lately divided into 2 dwellings with yard once in occupation of Mary HAMMONS, now of Thomas PAGE and JOHN CURTIS. These dwellings were by Indenture of Enfoeffment of 15 May 1783 granted by Edward BATEMAN then of Barby yeoman to Thomas BASSETT deceased, then passed to WB.

On condition that his house is to be for the use of WB and his wife Mary for life and after their deaths for use of his eldest son JOSEPH BASSETT, the small cottage occupied by Alice Salisbury for use of his daughter HANNAH BASSETT and the cottage now 2 dwellings for use of THOMAS BASSETT his second son.

Signed WILLIAM BASSETT

Witnessed by William PITTOM and F BAUCUTT, Attorney at Law Long Buckby

Deed 2

16 January 1845

Mortgage in fee of the Remainder in fee in Premises in Barby Mr William BASSETT and

Mr George Valentine HEFFORD

Indenture between

1. William BASSETT of Barby labourer
2. Mr George Valentine HEFFORD gentleman of Rugby

Citing a Lease and Release of 3rd/4th December 1798 between William Bassett carpenter and joiner and Thomas Pittom yeoman, wherein the premises were sold subject to certain conditions.

William Bassett died in 1799, leaving Mary, now widow of JAMES SALISBURY of Barby, carpenter and joiner deceased, entitled to the estate for life.

Joseph eldest son of WB died intestate in 1824, and his interest descended to WB (Party 1) as his eldest son.

GVH lending WB £14.

Deed 3

7 April 1854

Mortgage of messuage shop and premises at Barby £120

Mr JOHN SALISBURY and Mr ZACHARIAH FOSTER

Indenture between

1. JOHN SALISBURY of Barby, schoolmaster
2. ZACHARIAH FOSTER of Barby, farmer

Citing Indenture of **8 March 1845** between

1. MARY SALISBURY
2. GEORGE VALENTINE HEFFORD
3. WILLIAM BASSETT
4. Said JOHN SALISBURY
5. JAMES HILL

John SALISBURY is securing a mortgage of £120 on the property with shop garden etc formerly in occupation of Joseph Bassett, then of his son Thomas and since of William Bassett deceased, then James Salisbury, late of his son John Salisbury afterwards of his widow and now of said John Salisbury.

A note attached to this document dated **26 September 1857** signed by THOMAS HOPKINS promises to take over the mortgage of £120.

Appendix 3

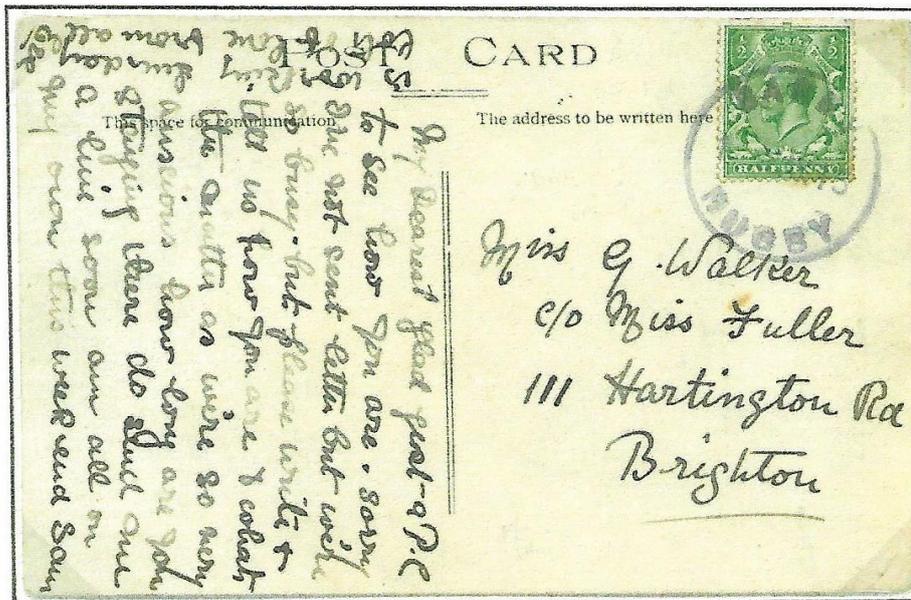
Post Office Memorabilia Courtesy of Derek Smeathers (BLHG D4/10)

A parcel label of the early type with a manuscript date 9th May 1895.

The adhesive is cancelled by the parcel handstamp of RUGBY STATION



On the postcard below, the adhesive is cancelled by the rubber circular datestamp of 1st May 1915.



The postcard was sent to her sister Gladys by Eveline Walker of Church Walk before her marriage to Sam Smith in 1916. Eveline's father Thomas Walker ran the bakery from No 4 The Green, he and Sam had a carpentry and wheelwright's business in Pittoms Lane where the Arnold Arms car park is now.



The old date stamp still held at the present Post Office as part of its history

(BLHG P13/142)