

TALES FROM THE RED BOOK

BARBY LOCAL
HISTORY GROUP
JANUARY
2022



INTRODUCTION

Barby Local History Group was established following a public meeting in June 1998. The Group was launched with an exhibition, of the first documents acquired, later in the year.

In 2000, a minute book with a red cover was purchased and circulated around members and their acquaintances, with the request to write about their memories, feelings and experiences of life in Barby. This became known as *The Red Book*.

The *Book* has since been used, not only to record personal reminiscences, but as a repository for published items such as newspaper reports and email messages.

The contributors to the *Book* cover a wide time span during which the village faded physically and then grew rapidly in the Nineteen Sixties and Seventies. Inevitably, this growth dominates these periods and World War II dominates the 1940s. This article reproduces a range of the contributors' comments, in roughly chronological order.

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I: THE NINETEEN TWENTIES

by Victor Foster (1915 –2008) and
Kate Beresford (née Ivens, 1917 - 2006)

In 1920, at 5 years old, I started school. I would walk up the lane to Barby, about 1½ miles, in all weathers. The winters were very cold.¹

The teachers I remember were the infant teacher, Miss Harrison, and the headmaster, Mr Bradshaw. We used to walk round the village on May Day singing songs, then we had sack races etc in what was called the Hop Yard, a sort of recreation ground, approximately opposite the Rectory.² We then went back to the School and enjoyed refreshments, before going home.



TOM MASON at his forge

On the way we used to go into Tom Mason's, The Blacksmith's Yard, and watch him making horse-shoes and fitting them if we were lucky.³ (Tom also delivered the post.) We also liked to see Sam Smith the Wheelright making the wagons etc; wheels of course had to have iron bands fitted. They were made by the blacksmith and we used to see them fitted by putting the bands on bricks, then lighting straw underneath to expand the iron. Fitting the wooden wheel then they poured buckets of water on the iron band to shrink it, making a very tight fit. His workshop was on what we always called 'Sam Smith's Corner', the next right hand junction past *The Arnold Arms*. We went sliding on the weir during the winter.⁴

Our family and my Uncle Sam's family were staunch churchgoers. Though we walked over a mile all the week, we still had to do it again on Sunday and being in the choir meant I was expected to go whenever there was a service. Sam and his family lived in one of a row of thatched cottages covered by corrugated sheets which were on the church side of The Derry. He was one of a team of bell ringers, also singing in the choir; he was the Rev Mitchison's right hand man. Ted Dicey, Percy Cole, Percy Hales and Tom Mason also sang in the choir. Tom used to toll the bell when one of the villagers passed away, amongst other duties connected to the Church.

¹ The Foster family lived on a smallholding at *The Wharf* on Hillmorton Lane, adjacent to Norman's Bridge on the Oxford Canal.

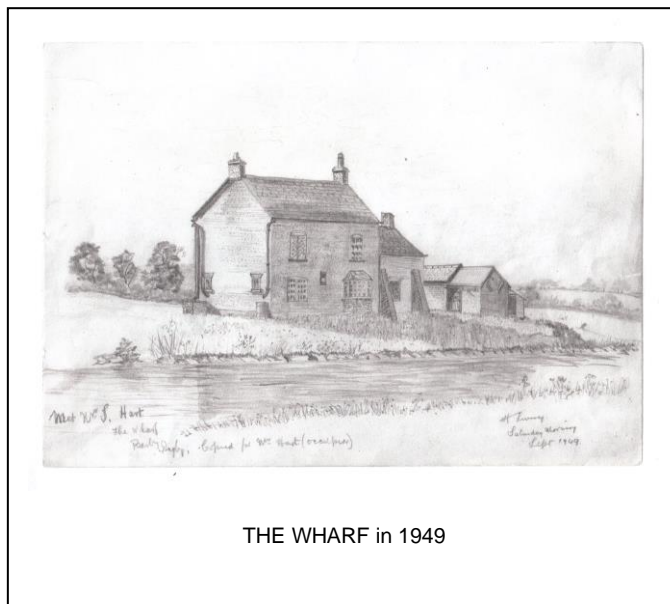
² More details of Victor's memories of school are recorded in *From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 years of Barby Schools 1865-2015* (Barby: Barby Local History Group, 2014)

³ Tom Mason's forge was situated behind *The Black Horse* on Rugby Road, south of Shakespeare Terrace.

⁴ The weir was more usually known as the *ware*; it gave its name to Ware Road.

More people attended church in those days, and I remember the Harvest festivals, when Canon Mitchison was the rector. He was so well known amongst the upper classes, and they came from far and near to hear him preach. So many people attended that extra chairs were put either side of the aisle; and the stained glass windows were full of produce the villagers had grown during the summer, including my parents.

My parents had a large garden on the smallholding, as well as Dad having a full-time job. We always had a job to do, never allowed to be idle, helping Dad dig and plant the garden.⁵ We had a milking cow; Mother used to make butter. We had a pony and trap and my Father used to buy two piglets on Easter Monday and fatten them up on whatever was thrown into the pig tub from the kitchen. We had an orchard and twenty or more hens. We had to go haymaking and help building and thatching ricks. Our summer evenings were spent 'cow minding' up the lane and Dad had a whistle he used to blow at 8 pm.



Our privy was right round the back of our farm buildings – not much use if you were pushed! We used to make rag rugs. Our lighting was obtained by paraffin oil lamps in the living room with candles to go to bed with. We drew our water from the canal for everything except drinking, which we obtained from a constant flowing brook which ran under the canal. In spite of having to run a smallholding our Mother used to turn us out prim and proper for Sundays.

People said that prior to the 1920s our house was a pub, which I believe was true because one side and corner of the kitchen was fitted with seating and carved end pieces to rest on.⁶ We loved to play in the washhouse on Monday, washday.

In the village and round the farms the local butcher, Mr Haddon, delivered meat; the baker and the milkman called. There were only two shops: one was the Post Office; the other was Walkers' Shop, up by the bakehouse and through a jetty, which brought you out into Church Walk, and the bells used to tinkle whenever the door was opened. If we were lucky and had an old penny to spend, we could buy a halfpence of toffee and save the other halfpence to spend another day on sherbet dabs. But it had to be earned by scrubbing the quarry floor in the kitchen or some other chore.

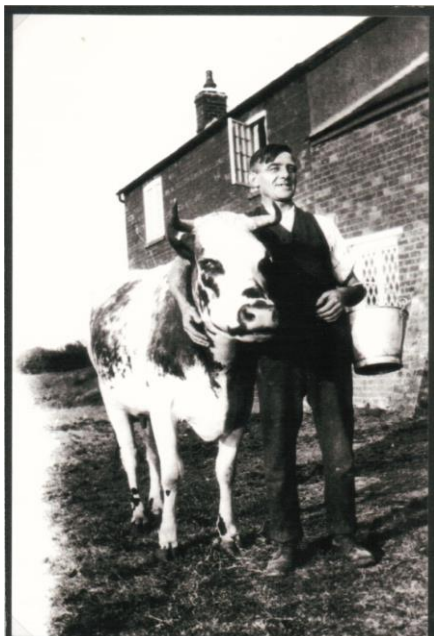
⁵ Victor had two brothers and one sister.

⁶ The pub was *The Boat Inn*.

We always looked forward to Wakes Week, when the fair pulled up on the green, with their steam-driven engines, with all the fun of the fair: merry-go-rounds, the cake walk, swing boats and a man we only knew as Cote Mills, who set up his skittle table. When my Father took us up to the fair, he always liked his game of skittles and Cote Mills used to fill his pocket with nuts, and we used to sneak behind the front room door where his coat hung and nick some nuts to take to school with us.

As well as the fair there was always a dance in the Memorial Hall by Walkers' Yard along Chapel Row. But the privy, as far as I remember, was at Mrs Seeny's next door for the ladies, while the menfolk used to water the flowers by the hedge opposite the Hall. The men in the choir always had a chat and a smoke leaning on the wall at the bottom of The Derry, before going home for Sunday lunch. The choir supper was another great event, held in the Village School. After supper, prizes were distributed for good attendance during the year. My brother and myself both chose a trumpet, which, as you can imagine, was not very welcome when we arrived back home. A Mr and Mrs Mews and two daughters (who lived in Slade Road at one time) provided the on-stage entertainment. A Miss Smart from Kilsby used to attend Sunday morning services and she rode from Kilsby to Barby on a tricycle regularly.

In the bank by the canal there was a large hole cut out, covered with sheets of metal, large enough to drive a horse and cart in easily, and I recently read that this used to be done to provide shelters for the navvies as they dug out the canals. We enjoyed seeing the boats unloaded with stones and gravel. The men worked like Trojans, filling the barrows and using a plank run to wheel the metal barrow along the wharf side. Mr Charles Batchelor would arrive with a cart and two horses; he would load up with a shovel and then, after much whipping and shouting, the horses pulled the cart up out of the wharf and took the stones etc up the lane side ready for the steam roller and a gang of men to repair the road. The steam roller was parked in our gateway overnight and us two lads loved to watch them get the steam up next morning. By this time we had grown up and learnt to cycle about, so the pony and trap was sold off. But we were still kept on a tight rein and any misdemeanour and you had the strap.



Living by the canal, during our school holidays we used to like to go fishing. A gentleman from Hillmorton bought us fishing sets and that proved to be my first unwelcome dip in the canal. Fortunately, my Father was handy at work and he pulled me out, but the fish got away. Since those days I have always been interested in fishing.

Left: DICK FOSTER
(Victor's father) in the 1920s

My Father unfortunately came home from work ill one evening and died a week later from pneumonia, on March 13th 1930; it was a shock to us all as he was only 42.

We stayed on at The Wharf for two years and in the summer of 1931 I remember walking along the canal towpath, where they were demolishing the hump-backed bridge on the Kilsby road. Their method of breaking through the centre brick arch was loading the bucket attached to the steam crane cable with rubble and hoisting it up over the arch, then releasing the clutch and letting the bucket drop, onto the centre, having previously planked over the canal. After an hour or more, the old arch finally gave in, the planking underneath could not stand the weight and it all finished up at the bottom of the canal, much to the surprise of everyone present.

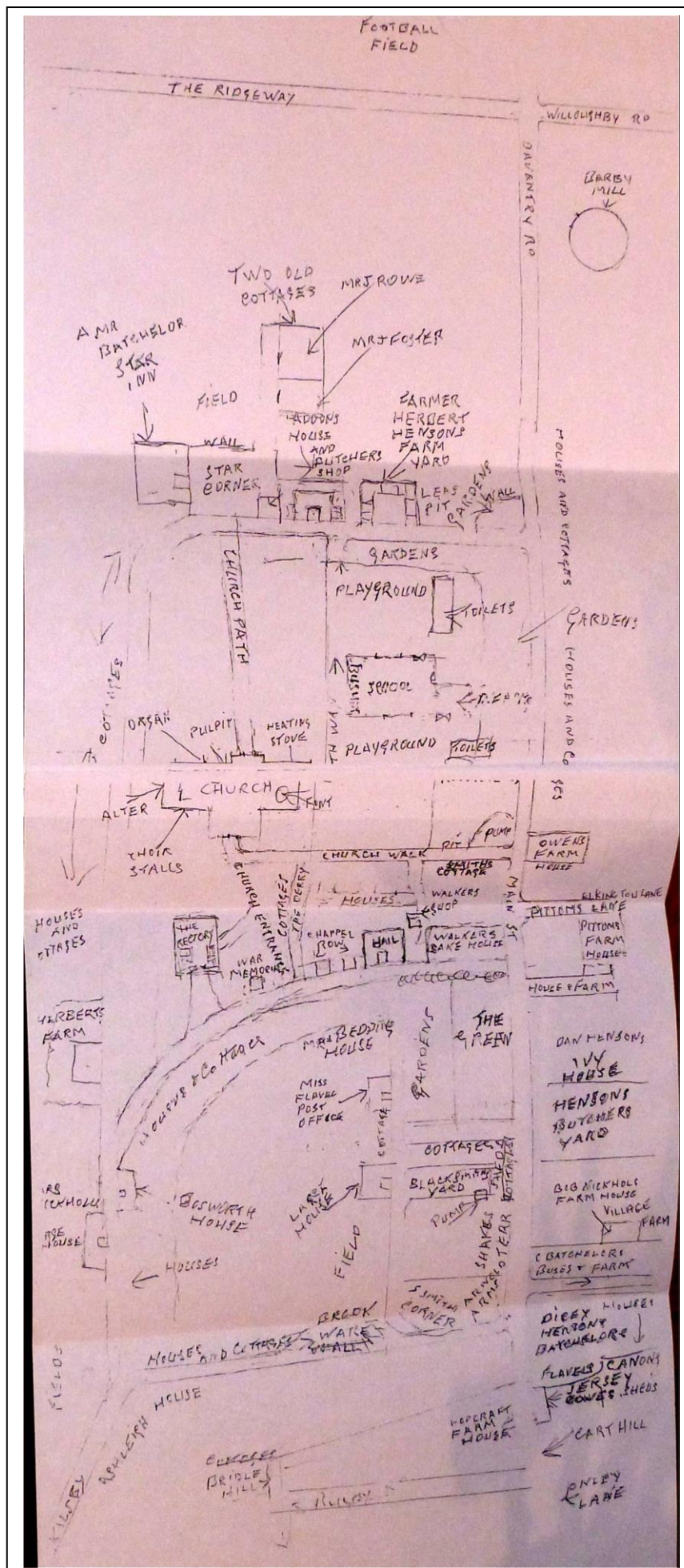
We left The Wharf in 1932, to live in Sidney Road, where I became interested as a teenager in the building trade, as a bricklayer. I finally set up my own business, which I ran for almost 30 years, with my wife and six daughters, from 11 Willoughby Place, our home.

Victor Foster
April 2004



*Victor remembered gypsies visiting Barby regularly, as did **Kate Beresford**. Kate lived in Willoughby but was taken (on foot) by her mother every week to visit her grandparent, the Hawes, at Grove Farm in Barby, until her grandfather died in 1925. She recalled:*

The road was not made up then, and was just a track between the verges. There were often gypsies camping alongside the road and they were always friendly and polite. They were horse dealers and would work their way up from The Navigation towards Barby as they moved a little every day to give their tethered horses fresh grass. My father bought a pony from the gypsies and it was a lovely-tempered animal. The women would hawk small items they had made round the villages, especially split clothes pegs. The gypsies also provided casual labour at harvest time. When I was about four, a young gypsy woman gave birth to her baby in our cowshed as my mother had said she could stay there, and I thought it was the baby Jesus.



This MAP OF BARBY in the 1920s was drawn from memory by Victor Foster.

II: THE NINETEEN THIRTIES

by Joyce Owen (née Herbert, 1924 –)

I was born at The Homestead in Kilsby Road in 1924, the home of my mother's parents, Gran and Grandad Hawes. I was honoured to be christened by Canon Mitchison, a well-respected member of the Church. On retirement, his son, Rev Stovin, took over the living: his claim to fame while at Cambridge University was to row in the Oxford/Cambridge Boat Race.

My sister Noreen is 2½ years younger than me and, before she was born, we had moved to a farm, The Grove on Daventry Road. We grew up on the farm. There was so much to do and so many fields to wander round, picking wild flowers and blackberries. Also apples, pears, cherries, plums and damsons in a large orchard. Our toilet was outside, past the pump and the pigsty. On arrival there was a step up, and one seat was larger than the other, side by side. We were afraid of falling down the hole.

The school was adjacent to the Church. My teacher was Miss Florence Harrison. When my parents and grandparents were invited to a wedding with no children allowed, Noreen was not yet at school, so Miss Harrison suggested she attend for the afternoon. After school she took us to her house in Shakespeare Terrace and gave us tea.⁷

Holme Farm on Kilsby Road [since demolished] was Grandad Herbert's. He worked the farm with my father and his brother Alf. It was a mixed farm, some sheep, cattle, and milking cows, and some arable. When the corn was cut there was rabbit pie, which I didn't like very much.

By the time my two brothers had been born, we had moved into a cottage in the village. From the age of 11, I attended Rugby High School.



HOLME FARM

Mrs Mitchison, the rector's wife, ran a drama group and it was enjoyable. We rehearsed in the Drawing Room at the rectory; always wearing a fashionable hat, Mrs Mitchison was a very good producer: she taught us a lot. (When she died, six of us formed our own group, calling it *Barby Players*.) Lady Henley of Watford Court also ran a drama group. She organised a One-Act Play Festival from time to time and approached various village groups to join in. She engaged an

⁷ Joyce's memories of her first day at school are included in *From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 years of Barby Schools 1865-2015* (Barby: Barby Local History Group, 2014)

adjudicator and he judged and commented on the performances. This was very constructive to amateurs like we were.

Cecil Haddon owned the butcher's shop at Star Corner. If his brother, Claude, was in the shop, he was mean with two pennyworth of suet for a pudding. Mum sent us back and he said "Do you want enough to feed an army?"

A tall imposing figure was Miss Lizzie Flavel, who ran the Post Office and store. We, as children, were in awe of her, even afraid of what she might say if we put a foot wrong. She sold 'loose' treacle and we took a jam jar for her to fill. It was in a large glass sweet jar, and when our jar was full she cut it off with a knife.

Mrs Walker was a kindly old lady who owned the village general store. She sold everything from boot-laces to basins, from socks to sweets and groceries. The shop was in such a clutter that sometimes she couldn't find what was on your list and you waited until she did find it.

The Second World War started in 1939 and I left school the next year and went to work at BTH. By the time the War began, our cottage had been condemned as unlivable and we had moved into a 4-bedroom, newly-built council house on Daventry Road.

I can't imagine my childhood, into adult life, living anywhere else other than Barby. There were no TVs, and not many radios, but we were never at a loss for amusement.

There were sad times as well as happy. My favourite grandmother died in 1942; my father died in 1952, on the same day as King George VI. I married in 1955 and moved into Rugby in 1957 – the end of an era.

Joyce Owen

September 2003

III: THE NINETEEN FORTIES

by Malcolm Pettit (1930 –)

Roger Smithells (1905 – 1993) and

Joyce Owen (née Herbert, 1924 –)

Malcolm Pettit and his brother left London in September 1940, as evacuees. They were lodged with Mr and Mrs Ashwell in Barby until their parents thought it safe to return them to London, albeit in a new home, in 1942. He recorded his experiences for the BBC in 2004. His memories included Mrs Ashwell's ability to stretch food rations, Rev Mitchison and singing in the church choir, and the night of the Coventry bombing.⁸

Other evacuees came as families to live in Barby. The Smithells family moved from London into Ashleigh House, where they enjoyed the novelties of country living, including a flooded cellar housing frogs and newts, a water system dependent on a manual pump and a garage used for killing pigs – but they did have one of only two bathrooms in the village. Roger Smithells wrote⁹:

People talk glibly of the Simple Life of the country. From the housekeeper's point of view country life is infinitely complex. It is not easy, for example, to substitute for the London grocer's daily call an uncertain monthly delivery from the nearest town. True, there are two shops in the village: the large, neat Post Office run by a large, neat woman who is chronically short of everything – even stamps, and the General Store, a well-stocked, happy-go-lucky shack which discourages the fastidious by a cheerful disregard of hygiene.

It is possible to visit the neighbouring town by the village 'bus, but this undertaking requires faith and hope since the published time-table provides only a rough guide to the actual movements of the conveyance. On Fridays, for example, the one-forty-five 'bus delays its departure till two-fifteen to allow the publican's wife to close the bar and don her pink satin blouse for her weekly visit to the shops. On one occasion, a mile on the outward journey, the 'bus stopped and returned backwards to the village because this lady had forgotten her purse. Such vagaries are common.

Another custom unfamiliar to the townsman is the system for summoning the doctor, which is done through the agency of Mrs H, who flaunts a white towel from the front room window of her cottage as a signal to the doctor to stop when next he is passing. He is then directed to the patient. The system appears to work admirably since the mortality in the village is exceptionally low.

⁸ Malcolm's full story can be found at www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar; his school memories are included in *From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 years of Barby Schools 1865-2015* (Barby: Barby Local History Group, 2014).

⁹ The original article, from which these excerpts are taken, appeared in *The Silver Whistle*.

It is an odd, surprising life, full of small adventures. It is not at all the sort of thatched idyll we dreamed of in London; but we like it. Unlike thousands of other evacuees we shall not lightly relinquish the hospitable countryside when peace comes again.

Roger Smithells

c1945

***Joyce Owen** remembered the arrival of the evacuees from London and Coventry; two children, a brother and sister, came to stay in their house. Later, three airmen were billeted on the family, and Joyce recalled:*

Extra people in the house helped with the rations.

The airmen had a lorry at their disposal and when they went to dances in other villages we were given a lift, with an assurance to our parents that they would look after us. The Barby Camp entertainment committee often arranged shows and dances for the troops.¹⁰ They also formed a dance band which played for the dances; it was one of the most rhythmic bands around. The local villagers were invited to these entertainments. Noreen and I cycled there, unless a friend came, when we travelled in style – a taxi.

More on 1940s life can be found in A POW's Story of Life in Barby 1946-1948, by Guenther Rosenkranz, on this website.

¹⁰ Barby Camp was situated off the A45, at Onley. It was originally an Armaments Depot. After the War it became a POW camp. The site is today now occupied by a prison complex.

IV: THE NINETEEN FIFTIES

by Veronica Knowles (née England, 1950 – 2005)

Barby seemed a quiet place in those days but had quite a selection of characters. From Owen Maclaren who quietly worked on various projects in his barn and when retired invented the Baby Buggy Pushchair, a picnic chair (the Gadabout) and a disabled chair; to Frank Smith who invented the Vending Machine and, of course, Billy Balding who invented the Gag Bridle and Balding Girth for horses which are still in use to this day. Owen Maclaren had been a fighter pilot during the Second World War and Frank Smith had been working with Sir Frank Whittle (inventor of the jet engine) at Lutterworth before starting his own business. I personally grew to know both of these people fairly well and was fascinated as a child by the projects they were working on and enjoyed visiting their workshops.¹¹

Sadly, Billy Balding had died by the time I was old enough to ride ponies but his daughters told me many stories of his colourful life, including trips to far away places such as India and Argentina to play polo and sell the ponies he took with him. Joan, Bay and Doll rode from childhood and learned to break and train polo ponies from their father; from what I could gather he was a hard taskmaster and they were allowed little time off for normal children's activities.

Doll taught me to ride on an old pony called Winkie who delighted in putting children on the floor. Myself and a few other village girls had the pleasure of this experience. Doll also showed me how to muck out stables, groom horses and clean the tack, but on Saturday mornings I had to weed the cobbled yard in return for my riding lesson. Doll always made this fun and we would end up in stitches after I nearly fell off jumping an old apple tree branch.

There were always things to do in the village depending on the time of year and the Village Fete was a great annual event for the school children.¹² After the procession I helped to give pony rides with Derek Evans for church funds. Barby was a very happy place to grow up and I am thankful that it was possible to meet so many kind people. The village was of course much smaller then but many people worked very hard to organise activities which everyone could join in and enjoy.

We as children also had the opportunity of watching some of the last old craftsmen at work, such as Sam Smith in his workshop making coffins and other joinery, Tom Mason the blacksmith making metalwork and the local farmers using traditional machinery and farming methods. A ride on a horse and cart made my day, and my brother went shepherding in a tub trap with Peter Martin. A link with the past perhaps now provides a way for the future? I hope so for many other village children.

Veronica Knowles July 2001

¹¹ Veronica grew up next door to Billy Balding's daughters, who lived in Holly Lodge. The house opposite, Arnold House, was occupied by the Maclarens, but had previously been occupied by Billy Balding; Arnold House has stables built for polo ponies.

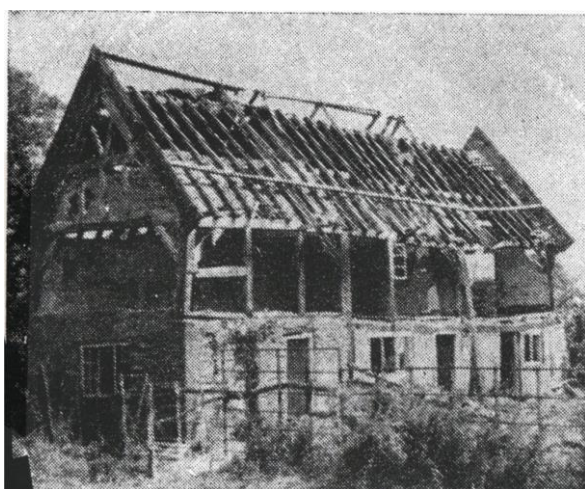
¹² Veronica's account of the children's part in the Fete is included in *From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 years of Barby Schools 1865-2015* (Barby: Barby Local History Group, 2014)

V: THE NINETEEN SIXTIES

by Jean Jinks (1926 – 2011) and

Bill Potts (1920 - 2017)

It was on Dec 30th 1963 (a cold, frosty day) that we moved from Rugby into Kilsby Rd. This part of the village was changing rapidly, from a road which still had several old stone buildings, and cottages which were being demolished to make way for new houses and bungalows. Our building site was apparently once earmarked for the new rectory, but the Church authorities decided that the site of the old rectory and gardens would be the appropriate place. And so our plot was auctioned and eventually the bungalow built on it became ours. Before the War it was the Barby Tennis Court.



The THREE COTTAGES which made way for 44 Kilsby Road

The Homestead has had several owners since we arrived and is now the property of Mr & Mrs Busfield.¹³ Mr Roberts, the farmer from Kilsby, used the barn adjoining it for several years until it was knocked down to make room for a house. Several derelict cottages, cob walls and thatched roofs, just beyond it, were also demolished (in 1964) and there are several pairs of semi-detached houses there now. One thing we'll remember is that, as the cottages came down, we had an unwelcome invasion of rats at this end of the road.

Opposite to the Homestead lived Mr and Mrs George Byerley, whose house now belongs to Derek Middleton. George was employed for many years by the local farmer Mr T Pittom. He was a much valued farmhand and, from his retirement when he was in his 80s until his death, the daughters of Mr Pittom paid for George's weekly Sunday lunchtime pint at *The Arnold*. He was a keen gardener and grew vegetables which were the envy of many. Rose took part in many village activities, including the Women's Institute. They were able to celebrate their Diamond Wedding in the Village Hall.

Barby Cottage (now owned by Mr & Mrs Bob Wilson)¹⁴ was originally in the same family for 400 years. I just remember the last members – Dr Ruston and his wife, who lived in London but came to Barby quite often. Mr & Mrs George Elkington were caretakers of the cottage for some years. When Dr Ruston had to give up the cottage, it was sold, with contents, and the orchard adjoining,

¹³ Mr & Mrs Busfield have since moved.

¹⁴ Mr & Mrs Wilson still (in 2021) live in this house, but it is now called Boseworth Cottage.

on a hot sunny afternoon and Kilsby Road was filled with prospective purchasers and their cars. Three houses now stand on the site of the orchard.

Holme Farm, which was on the corner of the road opposite, was sold for development, hence Holme Way appeared. Many of us remember when the old farmhouse was knocked down – there was a bright blue glow from the electrical system showing for several hours before it all finally ignited.

Hopthorne Farm had been unoccupied for many years when we came here. Mr John Walker and his wife Mary owned it, but lived in Grey's Orchard, opposite. They kindly allowed Barby Youth Club, which was run by Derek Winslow and the late Graham Camp, to use it for their club evenings. The members often invited residents to join them for darts matches, table tennis, etc. After a few years, Mr Walker moved away, had Hopthorne Farm extensively renovated, and moved back to the village. It is now in the ownership of Mrs Pat Camp.¹⁵

During the time Hopthorne farmhouse was unoccupied, the associated farmland was used by Mr & Mrs Ned Fowler of Chapel Farm, for grazing for their Friesian calves. At the time there was a Foot & Mouth outbreak in the county (but not in Barby) and as a precautionary measure I was asked to visit the calves daily so that there was no direct contact with Chapel Farm, where the milking herd was kept. This I did for several weeks, after having first disinfected my wellington boots. Calves can be quite boisterous, and I wasn't totally brave, but they soon got used to my intrusion into the field.

The Star public house was still open when we came but it was soon closed and the building used for shops and a hairdressing salon. It is now a private dwelling. The land behind it was still farmed (by Mr Herbert Henson, who lived at Crown House), but eventually the fields were sold and they became what is now known as Brackendale Drive. At Crown House Mrs Henson converted a room into a small shop and sold birthday cards, writing paper, toys and other small commodities.

Opposite [Crown House] was Barby School – now Barby Village Hall, a very busy centre of activities.

There have been so many changes in our road we feel privileged to have seen it happen, and are so very thankful for all the friends we have made.¹⁶

Jean Jinks
February 2001



¹⁵ Both Graham and Pat Camp are now deceased and their son Richard and his wife Catherine live at Hopthorne Farm.

¹⁶ Jean was a churchwarden at St Mary's for many years.

The publican of The Star until it was closed in 1965 was Mr Bill Toney, who came to Barby from Coventry the day before the bombing of November 1940, which demolished his former home. He enjoyed many conversations about his life and times with his neighbours Bill and Diana Potts, who came to the village to live in a new house on the south side of Ware Road, adjacent to Manor Farmhouse, in August 1966. Diana's memories of Mrs Brown, headteacher of Barby School, are contained in From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 years of Barby Schools 1865-2015 (Barby: Barby Local History Group, 2014). Bill Potts wrote about the changes in his part of the village:

Manor Farmhouse was a three-storied brick building similar to Ashleigh House and probably of the same period. It stood back from the road with stabling and outhouses fronting Ware Road and a large Dutch barn to the rear. When we first arrived, G Wigley, the owner of Manor Farm, was running a tractor and agricultural repair and services business in the Dutch barn. Later this changed to become a manufacturing one, making buckets etc for JCB-type diggers and earth-movers. This activity created a lot of noise, both day and night, and also a lot of electricity breakdowns due to overloading. After many complaints and protests, the Council pressurised him to move from the village and he had a new factory built on his own land in Barby Lane.

From our front windows we could look across the fields to Nortoft Lane and beyond, for there was a gated field belonging to Manor Farm; adjacent to this field were the wooden hutments which formed the Village Hall standing in quite a large field; then came two bungalows and finally Ashleigh House, with the old stone barn at the corner of Ware Road and Kilsby Road. Opposite this barn, on the south side of Ware Road, a bungalow was nearing completion.

The first change in Ware Road was to the vacant plot opposite The Arnold Arms; this had 2 bungalows built on it, one in Ware Road and the other in Rugby Road. The second change was a major one: this was the sale of the village hall site, together with lands from both Manor Farm and Ashleigh House, the development becoming Ashleigh Close. This development removed mature trees and hedgerows, also our view across the fields.¹⁷

In the meantime, in Pittom's Lane the old smithy and building had been demolished and three houses built on the site.

After a few years, G Wigley left the village and Manor Farmhouse was rented out for a year or so, eventually being demolished together with all the outbuildings and the site cleared. It remained derelict for some time before being developed at a very slow pace and becoming Manor Farm Close. After some 15 years, both our front and rear views had completely changed.

Bill Potts
March 2001



¹⁷ The development of the old village hall site took place after the conversion of the Village School into a new Village Hall in 1972.

VI: THE NINETEEN SEVENTIES & EIGHTIES

by Lyn Beveridge (1929 - 2015) and

Eileen Castle (1938 – 2013)

I came to live in Brackendale Drive on 31st April 1971 with my husband and two children. We moved from a busy Manchester suburb and I can remember standing in my kitchen and 'listening' to the silence. Barby seemed so peaceful after the noisy main Manchester road we had lived on.

My main impression and memory of Barby is how much larger it has become. So many more houses have been built. Star Corner where originally two cottages stood opposite Mrs Davies' wool and children's clothes shop (now a private house). One of the cottages was knocked down and six modern houses stand there. Holme Way, Manor Farm Close, Ashleigh Close, Almond Close, Mitchison Close and recently Balding Close have all been built since I came to the village.

Whenever I needed to see the Dr I used to go down to the Nissen huts (the old Village Hall where Ashleigh Close now stands). Dr Daniels would always ask me what I thought the children had or what I had myself and I was always expected to have a specific 'illness'. He would come over from Crick twice a week to hold his surgery. Eventually it was moved to the new Village Hall which had been built onto the old school building. In time the practice was taken over by Dr Ward. Nowadays, of course, there is no surgery held in the village. A sign of the times!

I remember Mrs Thompson who delivered bread. She and her husband had a bakery in Braunston and they baked the most wonderful homemade bread. Mrs Thompson and her assistant came around every Tuesday and Friday carrying the bread in big wicker baskets over their arms, delivering to the houses.



Barby, like other villages all over the country is changing, some of it very, very good, some of it not so good, but I still wouldn't want to live anywhere else!¹⁸

Lyn Beveridge¹⁹

April 2001

¹⁸ Lyn's comments on the problems caused by school traffic are contained in *From Blackboard to Whiteboard: 150 years of Barby Schools 1865-2015* (Barby: Barby Local History Group, 2014)

¹⁹ Lyn moved to Castle Mound after her husband, Ron, died. Ron was the organist at St Mary's until his death in 1995. Their daughter Drusilla emigrated to Australia; their son David now lives in Worcestershire.

Eileen and Roger Castle moved from High Wycombe via Kilsby to Barby. Before they took over their new house in November 1976, the original builder of Holme Way had sold the unfinished development to another builder. Eileen reported:

Designs were modified; we actually had visits from the later builders to help them interpret the original plans for a correct layout! Perhaps as a result of all this, the numbering of houses is very erratic; numbers are as high as 43, but there is no 13/14 and few 20s – a puzzle for any new postman!

Holme Way was open-plan, typical 1970s design with Georgian style windows to the front and picture windows to the rear and timber cladding frontages with open porches in the larger houses. Since 1976 the houses have been much altered by extensions so that they have become much more individual in design.

In 1976, most couples moving into our road had young families or had children born here and our cul-de-sac was an ideal playground as youngsters graduated from push chairs to trikes and then to bicycles. Our first generation has now almost gone, but several young families have moved in, so that the 'way' remains a lively place of young play and laughter.

Our road is close to open country so we have pheasants, pigeons, crows of all kinds, the occasional woodpecker and smaller birds of great variety. We've had sheep stealing grass from the garden, horses' hooves on our lawn and a tame rabbit who survived three months out of captivity, despite the local cats. Foxes are often glimpsed in the field beyond our bottom garden. Our stream varies from full flow to mud silt, in which my white dog revels. It did 'flash flood' once when a neighbour damned it up to make a trout stream: it rose nearly seven feet!

We love living in Barby which has such a good sense of community, an excellent shop, an improving village pub and a lot of activities and interests on offer; also beautiful walks along Elkington Lane or by the Rainsbrook, a wonderful habitat for hares with skylarks and occasional visits from Canada geese and herons. We wouldn't choose to live anywhere else.

Eileen Castle²⁰

2002

²⁰ Eileen and Roger were founder members of Barby Local History Group.

