

**MARRIAGE AND BUSINESS LINKS
BETWEEN
TWO BARBY FAMILIES
1890 — 1993**

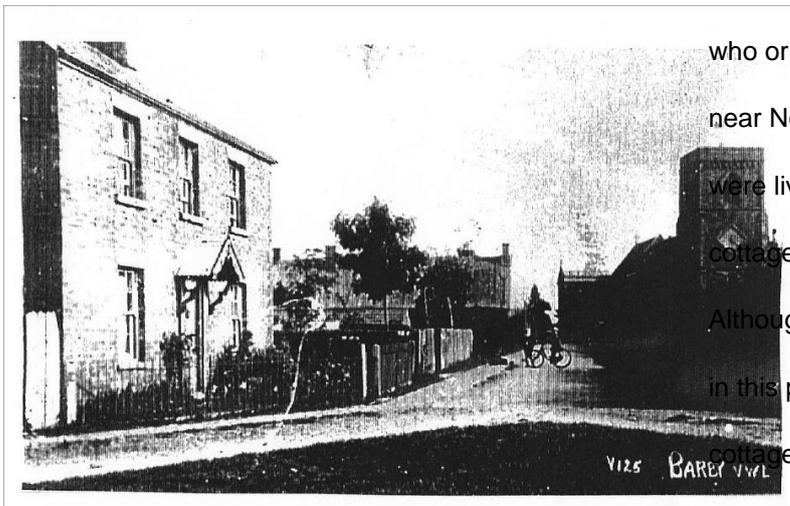
**BARBY LOCAL
HISTORY GROUP
JANUARY 2022**



Many generations of Barby people have passed through this door.

This article describes the history of a village shop and its owners, the Walkers and the Smiths, two families linked by marriage and business in Barby, Northamptonshire, from 1890 to 1993.

The story was told by Reg and Ivy Smith to Peter Start in 2003.¹



We start with the Whitney family, who originally came from Moulton near Northampton, and by 1890 were living in one of a pair of cottages in Church Walk, Barby. Although only one door can be seen in this photograph, once inside, the cottage divided into two homes.

Mrs Whitney was a member of the Adams family, bakers in Moulton, where it is almost certain that a Thomas Walker learnt the trade of baker. Thomas, not being content with one trade, also became a wheelwright, possibly learning this trade in Moulton, too.

Thomas's wife-to-be, Elizabeth, originated from Thornborough in Buckinghamshire. She too had many skills at her disposal.

¹ The original document, in booklet form, has been modified slightly for this website version. Reg & Ivy died in 2007 and 2010 respectively. Peter Start (1934- 2016) was a founder member of Barby Local History Group; he compiled the booklet for Reg & Ivy and gave the Group a copy.

We next meet Thomas and Elizabeth as a married couple living in Guilsborough in 1890, still keeping their contacts with the Whitney/Adams family at Barby. Through the grapevine Thomas and Elizabeth learned of a vacant cottage in Church Walk - the second of the pair. So sometime during 1890 Mr and Mrs Thomas Walker left Guilsborough by carrier's cart along with their worldly goods, making their way to Barby to begin a new life. (The 1891 census gives Thomas's age as 25 and Elizabeth's as 29 years).

Thomas seems to have quickly set up in business, for the 1890 Hopewell's *Rugby Almanac* gives his occupation as a wheelwright in Barby. The Arnold Arms Yard, known as the stables, was the site of his business. By 1895 Thomas is described as a wheelwright and draper according to the *Midland Times* and *Rugby Gazette*. This combination seems somewhat unusual, but it appears to stem from Elizabeth's emerging shopkeeping skills. Her personal needs for sewing threads and bits and bobs extended to supplying the local village people. A room in the house in Church Walk was where this business was conducted.

This invoice of 1893 shows a much wider range of goods for sale, greatly extended from the earlier haberdashery items. The increased range would suggest a need for more space for storage and display, and so, in 1895, Thomas and Elizabeth moved to a cottage on The Green. Next door was a bakery and on the other side was the village Chapel. Here they established their drapery business in a lean-to, formerly occupied as a home.

BARBY - ~~1892~~ 1893

Wm Montgomery
BOUGHT OF T. WALKER,
DRAPER.
LAMP OIL, LAMPS, AND TINWARE DEALER, &c.

1	Pins	1	7 ¹ / ₂
1	locks	1	6 ¹ / ₂
	Remaind of Blankets		6
	do		11
2 1/2	Yarn Sewing	4	10
2 1/2	Shirting	4 1/4	9 1/2
2 1/4	Apron Linen	10 1/2	2 -
4	Flannel	4 1/2	1 6
1	Calico	2 1/2	2 1/2
1	pair of Blouses		11
1	Shawl		1 1/2
1	Milk Pan		6 1/2
1	White Apron		1 -
	Cotton Thread & Tape		6
			12 4 1/2



Thomas, Elizabeth, Ralph, Eveline and Gladys Walker

During this time there were three children born to the couple: Eveline in 1892, Ralph in 1894 and Gladys in 1896. In 1900 Thomas and Elizabeth bought their cottage for £25 from Theodore Wratishaw, Solicitors of Rugby.

In the 1901 census, Thomas is listed as having a bakery with employees. The picture now emerges of a family with three children busy with the bakery, the wheelwright's and the shop.

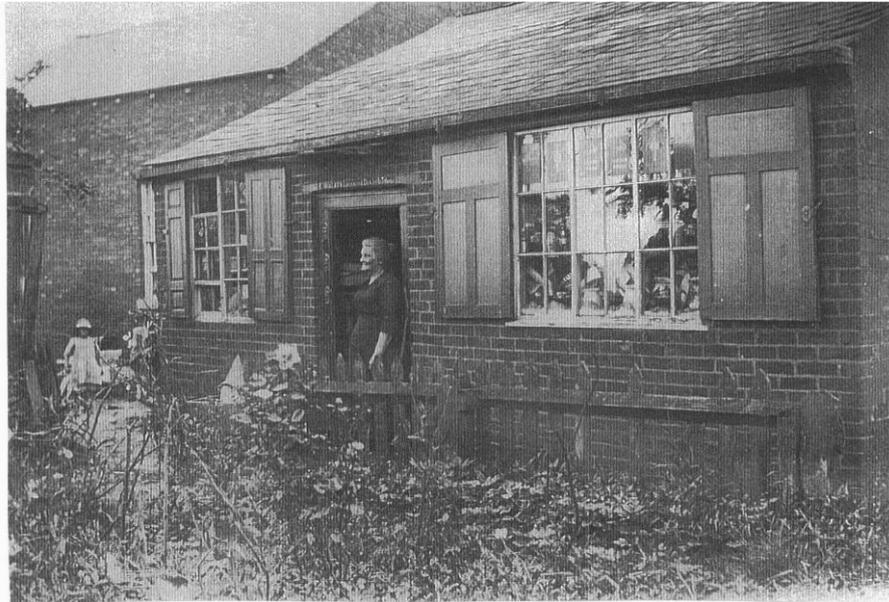
This invoice dated 1901 gives an interesting insight into the goods on sale. Elizabeth later branched out into catering for village functions, and her skill in lace making won her a national competition in the *Daily Mail*. She continued working in her drapery business lean-to (shown overleaf), until her death in March 1937, when her daughter Eveline took over.

July 19 1901
 Mt Walker Barby
 Bought of J. T. Jeffery,
 Importer of Foreign Merchandise,
 LONDON, BIRMINGHAM, MANCHESTER & SHEFFIELD WAREHOUSEMAN,
 24, SHEEP STREET, NORTHAMPTON.
and at 2, BRIDGE STREET, WISBECH, CAMBS.
 Cases to be returned and advised within 14 days, or cannot be credited.

2 doz 4pr Oval Kettles	4/6	2 3
1 - Candlesticks		9
3 - Jumbles	1/5	14 3
1 - Collar Supports		8
2 - Bk Combs	4/6	2 3
1 - Cup Hooks		8
1 - Sewing Eyes		8
2 Gros Cotton	8/6	4 3
4 doz Thread	9	3
1 - Bead Bags		4
1 - Crinoline Paper		8
1 - Porto Paper		1 6
3 - Mohairs	3 1/2	10 8
3 Cards Studs	1/2	4 1/2
1 doz Pearl Buttons		8
3 - Tie Clips	4 1/2	1 1 1/2
1 - Hook Eyes		4
4 - Tape	8	2 10
Carriage		1 11 4

Life progressed very well for the Walkers.

Meanwhile, another couple, William and Mary Smith, who lived in a cob cottage next to the Hop Yard (opposite the former rectory in Rectory Lane), were bringing up their family.

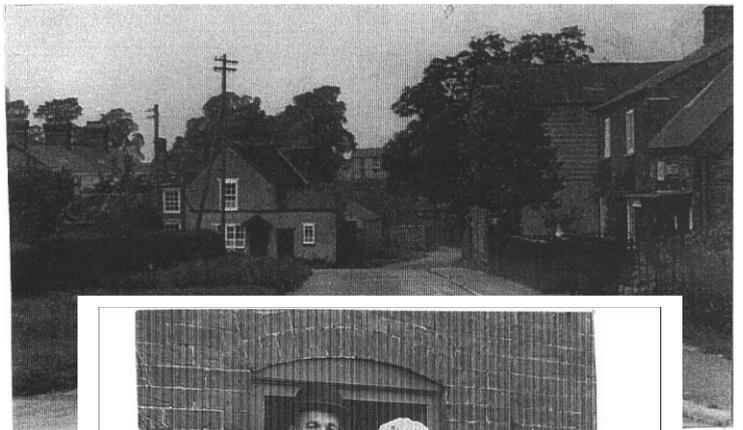


William Smith was also a wheelwright, but there is no written evidence of him working with Thomas Walker.

William and Mary had a total of seven children, with Edwin Samuel, known as Sam, being the second son. Sam followed his father's trade as a wheelwright. He trained as a journeyman under George Hopkins whose workshop was next to the Old Post Office on The Green.

At the outbreak of war in 1914 Ralph Walker, who by now was a trained baker, entered the RASC and continued in his trade.

Meanwhile Sam Smith was not accepted for war service owing to an earlier leg injury, but he spent his time in Coventry, making wheels for military vehicles. Sam stayed the week in Coventry, returning to Barby at the



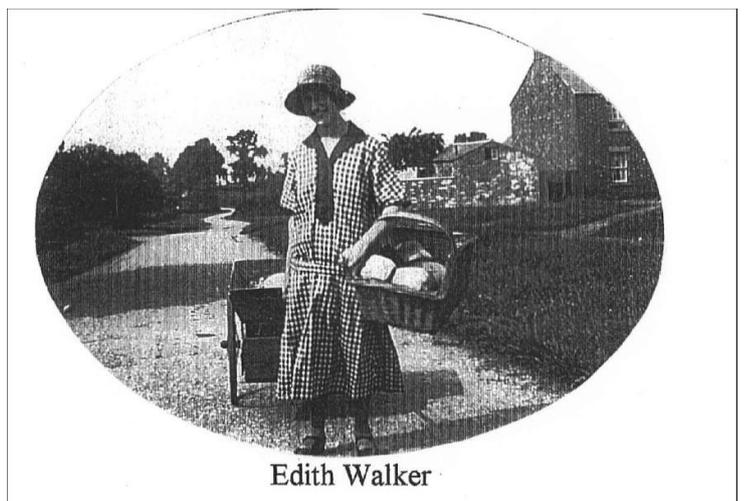
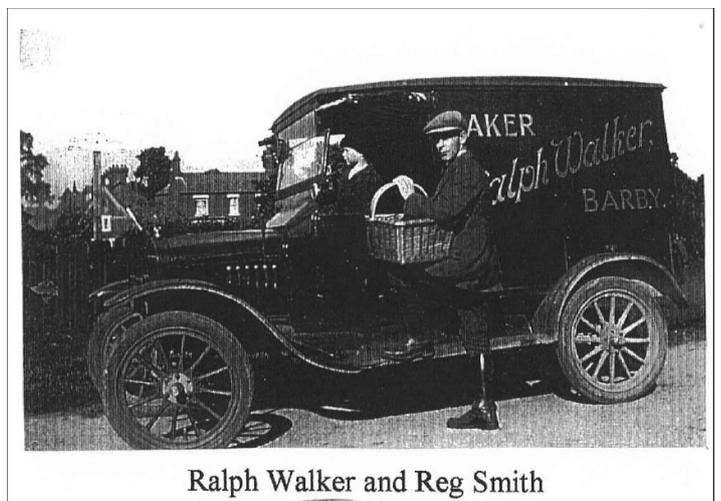
The marriage of Sam Smith to Eveline Walker in 1916

weekends on his cycle.

The link between these two families, the Smiths and the Walkers, was made at this time upon the marriage of Eveline Walker to Sam Smith in 1916.

In 1917 a third generation member of the combined families was born: Reginald Smith.

In 1918 Ralph Walker returned from the army and resumed his trade within the family bakery. The Walkers' wheelwright business and drapery were still flourishing. This picture shows Ralph in the early 1920s leaving the bakery with his deliveries and "co-driver": his nephew Reg Smith. This motorised means of delivery contrasts with Ralph's wife Edith making local deliveries on foot with her bread barrow pulled behind.

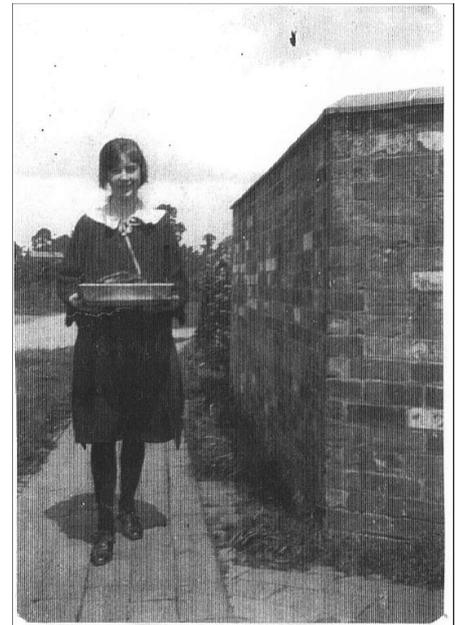


During the war years Thomas Walker had kept the bakery operating, but his mode of

transport for deliveries was naturally the horse and cart. Any repairs needed to wheels and

cart would very conveniently have been carried out by himself.

This picture shows Isobel Whitney collecting the Sunday roast from Walker's bakery. A charge of 3d was made. No bread was baked on Sunday, but, as a service, the oven was lit so that this common village practice of roasting the Sunday joint could take place. Isobel later returned to Moulton where she lived well into her nineties.



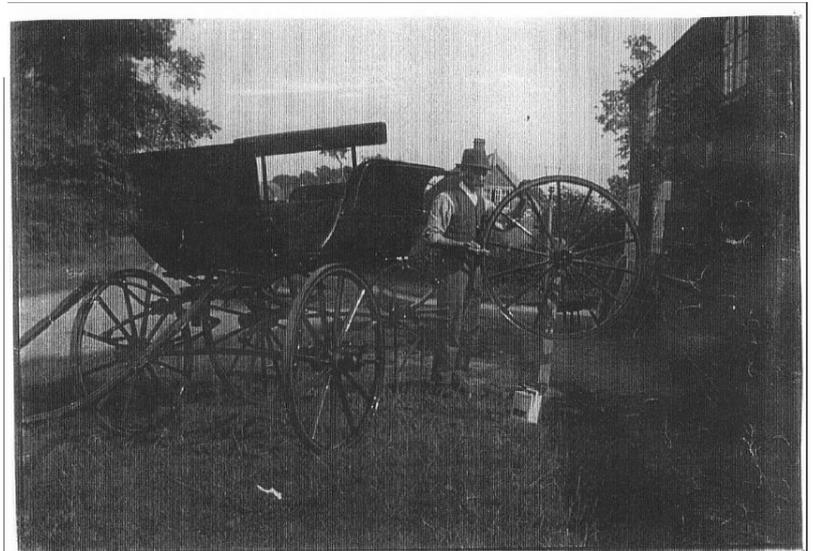
Isobel Whitney with her Sunday roasted joint

Ralph and Edith ran the bakery business until 1930, making deliveries chiefly to Hillmorton and all places in between. On the closure of the bakery, Ralph became an agricultural contractor and pig breeder, the pigs being penned in the polo ponies' stable next to Hopthorne Farm.

BARBY, No. RUGBY,	
<i>M. E. P. G. G. G.</i>	<i>1 May 1922</i>
Dr. to E. S. SMITH,	
Wheelwright, Carpenter and Undertaker.	
ESTIMATES GIVEN. ORDERS PROMPTLY ATTENDED TO.	
<i>1 White Coffin complete and lining with a set of Brass Furniture and Undertaker's fee?</i>	<i>2 0 0</i>
<i>Paid cash 11/-</i>	
<i>With thanks</i>	
<i>E. S. Smith</i>	

Sam Smith now worked with his father-in-law, but this invoice of 1922 suggests that he was in charge of the business, which at this time included both carpentry and undertaking.

This vehicle was used for special journeys only, perhaps by "special" people.





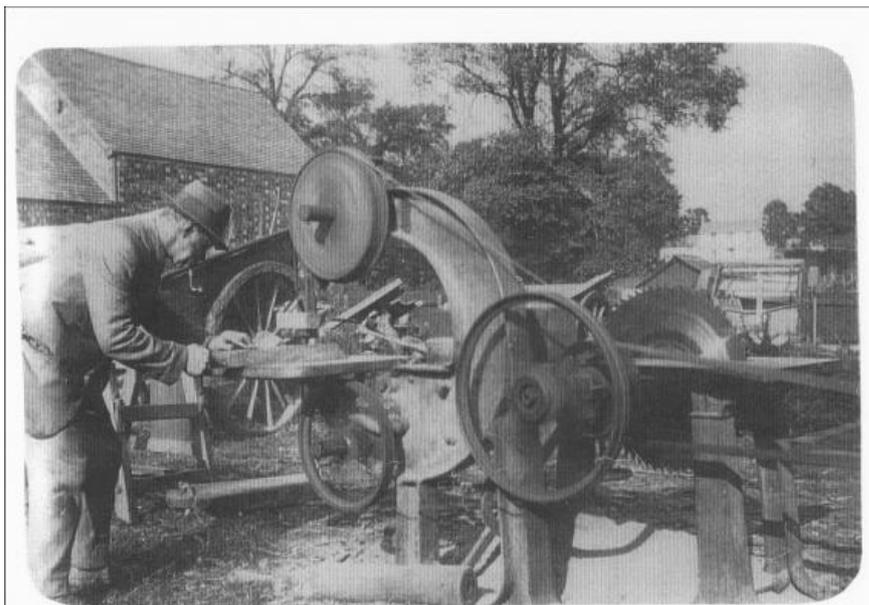
Sawing at Arnold Arms Yard – The White House in the background

Thomas Walker

Sid Haddon

Sam Smith

These various businesses continued throughout the first half of the twentieth century, but as the demand for wooden wheels decreased, so the business diversified into other areas, for example tinning over thatched roofs.



Thomas Walker in the Arnold Arms Yard

The shop attached to the family home on The Green continued, and served an important need in the village. Today we talk about local produce, and this picture shows it at its freshest: when customers bought potatoes, they were dug directly from the garden.



On leaving Lawrence Sheriff School in Rugby, Reg Smith began working on a large poultry farm owned by a Dr Harrison near Daventry Reservoir. To further his knowledge of poultry, he attended Moulton Agricultural College for a year, then followed this with practical experience on a poultry breeding station near Stoke-on-Trent. He returned to Dr Harrison's, concentrating on breeding stock rather than egg production.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Reg was ready to serve his country in the Northamptonshire Yeomanry. The war intervened in Reg's plans for his future, and on his return, after a brief spell at poultry breeding, he went to British Thompson Houston (BTH) in Rugby where he remained for eight years.

This photograph taken in 1946 shows Grandfather Walker, Eveline, Reg and his son Paul. This is the only photograph showing Reg's mother, as she was usually on the other end of the camera. Many of the photographs in this article were taken by Eveline with her Box Brownie. What an accomplished photographer she was!



Four Generations

Sam died in 1963, the same year as President Kennedy says Reg, bringing a second business to a close. In 1954 Reg had taken over the lean-to shop which his mother Eveline had continued to run up until this time.

The bakery, although it had not been used as such since 1930, was eventually demolished in 1963 to make way for a new village shop. This was firstly run by Reg and his wife Ivy, but later by his nephew Barry Smith who took over the business in 1986. The business was sold in 1993 when a shop was established at the petrol station and Post Office in Rugby Road, and now the old shop lies empty.²



BIG TOWN SHOPPING COMES TO BARBY

VG SERVICE

OXO 7th CUBES 12 PACK 1'8	V.G. LARD 1lb 1/2 lb ONLY 1'2	LARGE CMOZADE ONLY 2'4 15" HEINZ BRAND
TALL TIN ITALIAN TOMATOES ONE PRICE 10p	TALL TIN 2 1/2 lb H.P. BAKED BEANS 11 1/2	V.G. DIVIDEND TEA ONLY 1'7 1 1/2 LBS HEINZ BRAND QUARTER
3 1/2 lb H.P. BAKED BEANS 7'0	V.G. COFFEE LOOK!! ONLY 1'11 USE	TALL TIN ONLY FRUIT SALAD 1'6 TIN

4p OFF ANY 2 TINS OF HEINZ SOUPS!!!

R. Smith **OPENING**
BARBY **FRIDAY 18th**
1963

Reg and Ivy Smith with their son Paul and grandson William

² Today (2022) the building still referred to as 'The VG Shop' by many villagers is almost invisible under its cover of wild plants.