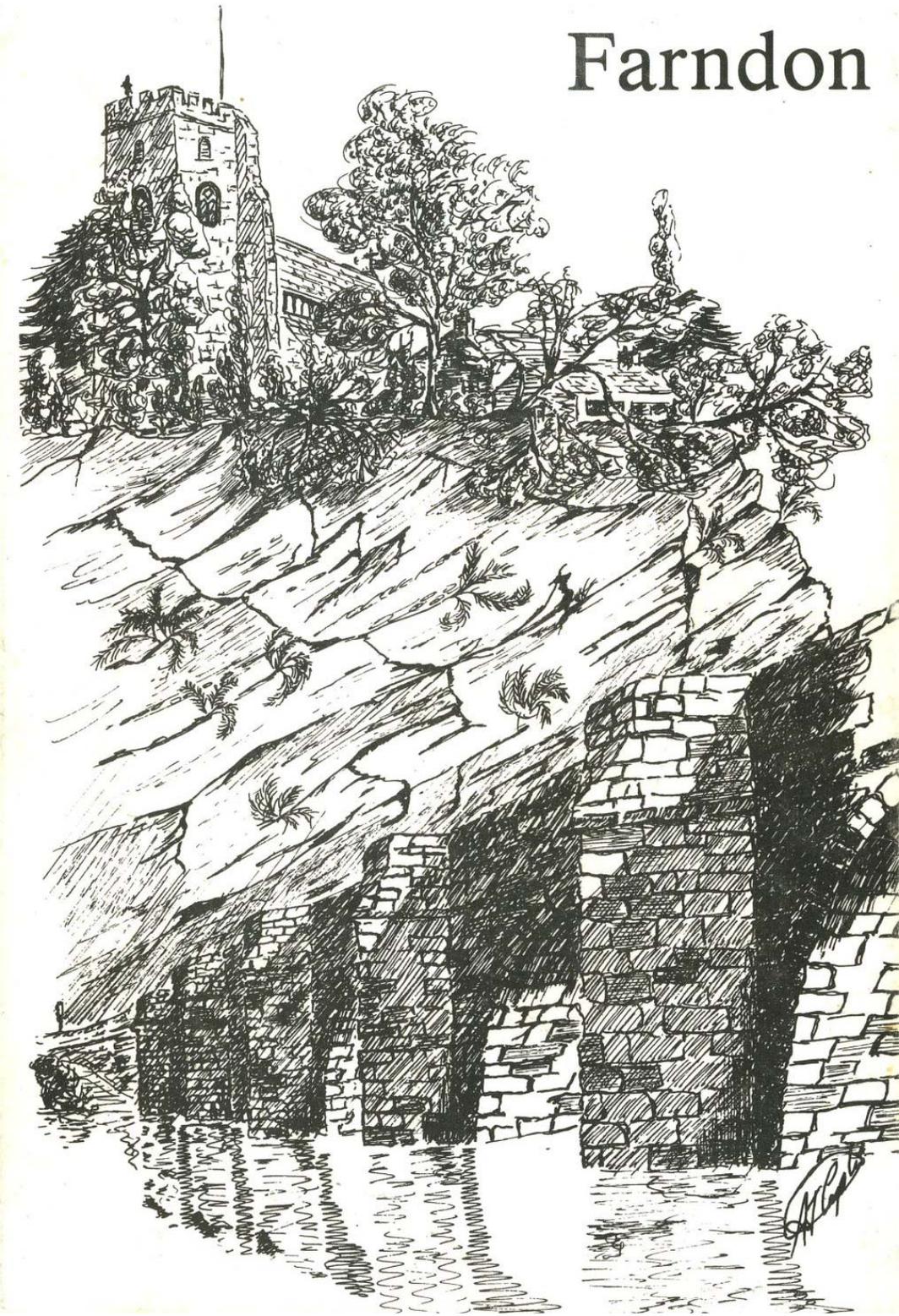
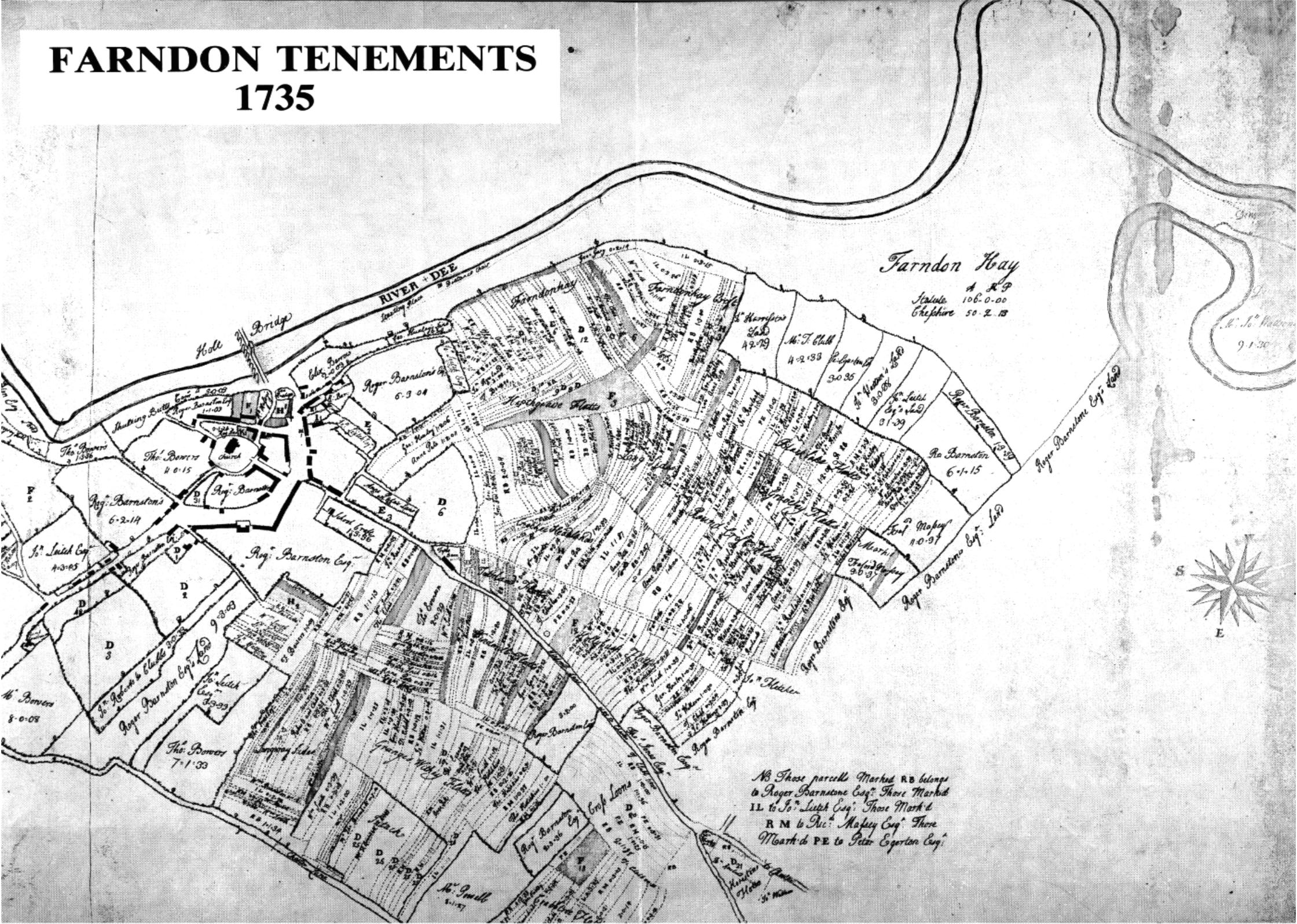


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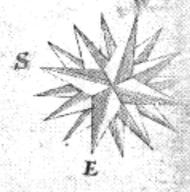


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FARNDON

The History of a Cheshire Village



FARNDON

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FOREWORD

Although my Mother's family have lived in Churton and Farndon for many generations, I did not come to live at Crewe Hill until my Great Aunt died after the war.

It was difficult to discover very much of the history of Farndon, as most of it was hearsay, and even that was conflicting.

Now, thanks to Mr Frank Latham and his Local History Group, there is all that I wanted to know in one book.

I would like to congratulate them all for the work they have put into this book, which is both interesting and, I believe, important for all of us who live in Farndon. It will be even more important in the future when much of what is known today would otherwise have been forgotten.

P. E. Trevor-Barnston

*November 1981
Crewe Hill*

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Probably the most illustrious son of the village of Farndon was John Speed who was born here about 1552. He is best remembered for his maps of Great Britain which were published in 1606 but he was also the author of a History which was written a few years later and in which he wrote of Cheshire as follows:

'The shire may well be said to be a seedplot of Gentilitie, and the producer of many most ancient and worthy families; neither hath any brought more men of valour into the Field than Cheesesshire hath done, who, by a generall speech, are to this day called the Chiefe of men, and for nature's endowments (besides their noblenesse of mindes) may compare with any other nation in the world; their limmes strait and well-composed; their complexions faire, with a cheerfull countenance; and the Women of a grace, feature and beautie, inferior unto none.'

Of course it might be argued that he was biased, but it is unfortunate for Farndon that he wrote nothing specifically about his birthplace. Instead, the most comprehensive collection of historical notes to which the present authors have had access are those from the pen of the former vicar of the parish, the Rev. L. E. Owen, which were written at the end of the last century. A later writer states that Mr. Owen attempted to 'gather together what scraps of material he could from registers, etc. and thus make a history of the place, but soon gave up the idea and hoped that some successor would succeed where he had failed'. The same writer felt it was unlikely that Mr. Owen's dream would be accomplished because so little had been left on record by past generations.

There is nothing like a challenge to inspire enthusiasm but it would be pleasant to think that the ghosts of both Speed and Owen had encouraged the present work. Whether or not it can be described as a dream fulfilled can only be judged by its readers.

As the editor of the book I believe the authors have successfully dispelled any doubts that may have existed in the past regarding the wealth of historical records available for research. Thanks to the Record Offices many hitherto unknown documents have come to light during the past 100 years and most have been examined. I should like to say what a pleasure it has been to work with the Local History Group and to congratulate them on their keenness and on their two years' hard work.

In conclusion, and on behalf of all of us, I should like to thank Maj. P. E. Trevor-Barnston for writing the Foreword, the inhabitants of the parish of Farndon for their co-operation, the W.E.A., the County and City Libraries, and the Grosvenor Museum for their continued support. A word of thanks must also be given to the following who have been of special assistance: The County and City Archivists, Dr. A. T. Thacker, B.A., The Cheshire Planning Dept., Mr. and Mrs. A. Pridding, Mr. and Mrs. J. Powell, Mr. G. Redrope, the P.C.C., Mrs. P. Butler, Major J. Fletcher and Mr. Laurie McKenna.

We hope that you will enjoy reading this book and that you will forgive any errors and omissions.

F. A. LATHAM,

HILBRE GRANGE, ALPRAHAM

PART I

INTRODUCTION

'Doubtless God could have made a better berry than the strawberry, but doubtless God never did'.

(Izaak Walton)

At the beginning of the century if a man was asked what he knew about Farndon, his reply, almost certainly, would have been 'strawberries'. Before the first World War several hundred acres in the parish were devoted to this fruit and many roadside cafes in the vicinity made a living in the summer time by providing strawberry teas. These were particularly popular at the weekends and on Saturdays and Sundays folk would travel to the Farndon area from all over the County.

In those times the pace of life was more leisurely, however, and latterly, not only has Farndon declined as a fruit growing area for a number of reasons, but, with the advent of the motor car, tourists from Cheshire are prepared to travel further afield; particularly over the border to the seaside resorts of North Wales.

Both Holt and Farndon are still famous for their strawberry crops but today if a man was asked that same question his reply would probably be 'the Bridge' or, to be strictly accurate, 'Holt Bridge'. For some years now this ancient structure has caused problems for villagers and travellers alike. Its preservation is imperative and yet its narrowness makes it quite unsuitable for the ever-increasing volume of modern traffic. Outside Chester it provides one of the few passages from Cheshire to Wales and although, as this book is written, a Farndon by-pass and a further modern bridge away from the village have both been discussed no decisions have yet been made.

Its claim to fame, however, will be discussed in later chapters and the purpose of this introduction is to give certain geographical facts about this very charming village of Farndon which stands on the bank of the River Dee. Like so many other Cheshire villages its main street, and the houses bordering it, have changed very little during the last century but it has expanded. Most of the new properties have been built during the last 30 years and these are mainly occupied by commuters who live in the parish but who work in the neighbouring towns of Wrexham and Chester. In the first instance the expansion of any village always results in apprehension by those families who have lived in it for many generations, but nowadays the influx of new people with new ideas is the only way a village can survive. The newcomers to Farndon have fitted into the community well and fully participate in its affairs.

Farndon is both a parish and township. The village is situated on the road from Nantwich to Wrexham and on the east bank of the Dee. It is connected with the village of Holt by a fine old bridge of nine arches, is six miles east of Wrexham and eight miles south of

Chester. It was, prior to 1974, in the petty sessional division and rural district of Tarvin, Chester county court district, the rural deanery of Malpas and archdeaconry and diocese of Chester. Since 1974, for civil purposes it has been in the Chester district within the new administrative county of Cheshire. From the historian's point of view it is in the higher division of Broxton hundred which, at the time of Domesday, was known as Dudestan. The area of the townships is 1,044 acres of land and 27 acres of water.

The townships contained within the ecclesiastical parish of Farndon are Barton, Churton by Farndon, Clutton, Crewe and Farndon itself. King's Marsh (Overmarsh) is extra-parochial. It would seem that Aldford was originally the moiety of the manor held by Earl Edwin and Bigot in 1086 and it is presumed that the present parish of Aldford represents this, whilst the other moiety, which belonged to the Bishop of Chester (i.e. of Coventry and Lichfield) retained the original name and remained as Farndon parish. The separation of the Aldford moiety into a district parish probably took place early in the twelfth century at the time when Churton was also believed to have been divided by a parish boundary on the line of the manorial boundary.

The 1971 census statistics for the civil parish are as follows:—

Area

Farndon	434 Hec.
Barton	214 Hec.
Churton by Farndon	180 Hec.
Clutton	256 Hec.
Crewe	118 Hec.
King's Marsh	333 Hec.

(One Hectare = 2.47 acres)

Population

Farndon	1162
Barton	83
Churton by Farndon	122
Clutton	125
Crewe	30
.King's Marsh	35

Households

Farndon	395
Barton	25
Churton by Farndon	40
Clutton	40
Crewe	15
King's Marsh	10

IN THE BEGINNING

When a man is digging his garden in Cheshire in the winter time, and when the land is bare and devoid of vegetation, he may well ask himself about those oddly shaped stones that he sometimes turns up. Where did they come from? By no means all have been left there by the builders of his house and he may well be surprised to learn that at least some will be what scientists call 'erratics' and will have originated in the hills of the Lake District from whence they will have come with the thaw following the last Ice Age.

This ice covered the Cheshire Basin from about 60,000 to 10,000 years ago and stretched south into Shropshire where, in places, it has been suggested that it may have been up to 20,000 ft. in thickness. As with all glaciers this carried enormous quantities of debris with it, scrubbed the tops of the sandstone hills and deposited rocks and clay silts in the valleys. A large part of North West England is covered by the Triassic rocks consisting of red sandstones and marls, gypsum and salt. The chief rock in Cheshire is known as the New Red Sandstone.

Farndon lies in the Dee Basin which may be said to extend from the Point of Air to the gorge at Erbistock, and from the base of the Welsh Hills to the 100 ft. contour on the east side of the river. This area is covered in most places with clay soils and silts. The silts being mostly below the 50 ft. contour and close to the river are liable to flooding. The deposits are broken in places by outcrops of sandstone of the Bunter Pebble beds, and the village is situated on one of these sandstone hills overlooking the gorge which has been cut by the River Dee. This sandstone outcrop, perhaps half a mile wide, extends north to Aldford.

In the area of the Peckforton Hills Bunter and Keuper Sandstones can be seen with the latter below. Both are quarried for building purposes, and the Bunter alone is in some places 600 ft. to 700 ft. in thickness. The soil of Cheshire is fertile and the vegetable mould of the drained peat bogs is capable of high cultivation. The thick clay is firm and heavy to plough but productive of rich grass for the farms. Near Farndon, only to the east and south in King's Marsh and Crewe are clay soils which are not very suitable for arable cultivation.

In many fields in the area there are ponds which were dug originally to obtain clay or marl to spread over and enrich the fields. These ponds are called 'pits' (short for marl-pits) and were dug by regular gangs of 'marlers' who went from farm to farm for that purpose. Artificial manures have now destroyed their calling and the pits today are used for watering cattle.

PREHISTORY

When the ice receded the land was first covered by tundra. After this came forests of birch and later of pine trees. As the glaciers melted the sea level rose and the land bridge to the Continent disappeared. The first hunters came to the east coast 9,500 years ago and reached the Pennines some 1,500 years later. Slowly the pines were replaced by temperate forests of such species as hazel, alder, oak, elm and lime. About 5,000 years ago the hunters of former ages were gradually replaced by men who cultivated the land and these began to change the environment. There would seem to be a possibility that Stone Age men who hunted and fished would have been found at times in the Farndon area; there were, after all, oak forests in which they could have lived and probably a plentiful supply of salmon and other fish in the river.

For centuries Farndon has stood on an important crossing of the Dee in that there is relatively high ground on both banks and just above the bridge a shallow crossing which is easily fordable. Although there is no evidence that this was used by early man he would obviously have found some form of crossing extremely important.

The first evidence of human occupation in the area is a Bronze Age burial at Holt just a short distance over the river, an Iron Age fort at Bickerton, and an aerial photograph of a crop mark taken during the dry weather of what would appear to be an Iron Age settlement situated between Farndon and Churton. Ormerod mentions the tumulus at Coddington and several smaller ones at Carden but does not attempt to date them. A late Bronze Age hoard was also found at Broxton.

While there have been no specific finds of this period in the Farndon area it is important to remember that most bronzes have been found in association with the river valleys of North Wales and Northern England. The evidence suggests that the inhabitants lived on the higher ground as found in the hill-top forts of the Iron Age. Farndon is ideally situated for a promontory fort all evidence of which would have been obliterated by the cultivations that have taken place over the centuries. This is only supposition but in any case the population would have been very sparse and have been limited by the food resources. Such people would have lived in primitive timber or mud huts roofed with grass sods and have cooked on stone hearths. Their pottery would have been of such crude nature as to defy recognition by any but expert examination. As there have been no excavations in the village that have been recorded, any evidence of the occupation by such people could easily have passed unrecognised.

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

B.C. 54-A.D. 410

Partly due to the forests and partly due to the high rainfall it is not thought that Cheshire attracted prehistoric man in great numbers. But, when the Romans arrived in the area about A.D. 60, according to Tacitus, it seems probable that the inhabitants they found would have been a northern branch of the Cornovii whose capital was at Viroconium near Shrewsbury. Unfortunately no Celtic histories or clay tablets exist so information regarding this period comes only from Roman records. In Farndon, however, it can safely be assumed that the population would have been sparse and would have occupied the areas on the banks of the river where the forests would have been less dense. The Dee would have provided an important form of transport as well as an abundant supply of fish. The ancient name for the river was 'Deva' and was derived from the Celtic word meaning 'goddess' or 'holy one' in line with the belief that rivers and streams were divine. Thus Farndon, or Ferentone as it was known in ancient times, became the name for the fern clad hill on the bank of the holy river.

Between 1907 and 1915 Holt was excavated by T. A. Acton who unfortunately died in 1925 without leaving a detailed report of his findings. Through his notes however, and through more recent excavations, it is now believed that this was the site of Bovium which was a place of some importance and was built about 100 A.D. as a works depot for the Twentieth Legion stationed in Chester. The site extended over 20 acres and stood half a mile to the north west of the present village. Its foundation followed the building of Chester fortress in about 76 or 77 A.D.

Holt probably rose to prominence because of the availability of stone and other building materials in the vicinity, and it was here also that tiles and cooking pots were made. In 1910 cartloads of broken pottery, tiles and drain pipes were found, many bearing the badge of the boar, the stamp of the Twentieth Legion. All these would probably have been transported to Chester, via Heronbridge, by river. Holt then was an outpost of Roman Chester and it was due to its proximity to it that Farndon also became a place of some importance.

In Roman times Farndon lay on the road between Chester and Wroxeter (near Shrewsbury) and it also commanded the ferry; the first means of crossing the river above Chester. The Roman road south from the city passed through Eccleston and crossed the river at Aldford by a ford, remains of which are still in position some four to five feet below the water level. As in those days there was no weir at Chester this could have been easily crossed at low tide. There is evidence of this road again south of Aldford and from Edgerley nearby to the Barton-Farndon road. It continued through

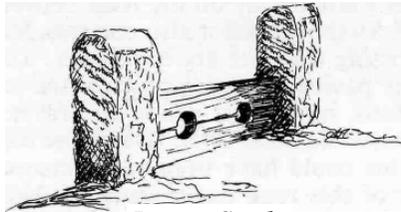
Stretton to Malpas and finally to Wroxeter. Another branch of this road must have passed through Farndon, across the ford in the river just above the bridge to Holt.

There is an existing bridle way from Aldford to the east of Churton to Rowley Hill and on to Caldecott and Shocklach. This has always been referred to by older local inhabitants as 'the Roman Road' but such misnomers are common in rural areas; such as the 'Roman Bridges' at Christleton. Nevertheless it is certainly an ancient highway and in parts there is evidence of a cobbled surface. Tales are told of farmers removing the cobbles to pave their yards and this, apparently, was common practice after the road ceased to be used for traffic. There is no evidence of the purpose of this road in the immediate vicinity of Farndon village but it must have crossed the river by the ford which lies close to the site of the tile works at Holt.

The picture of a fragment of a Roman monument, said to have been found in Farndon church yard, appears in a booklet about the village written in 1934. Additionally Roman tiles have been found at Crewe Hill which were similar to the floor tiles of a bath house in Holt and close to the river.

This latter piece of information would seem to indicate that there was either a Roman villa there or some kind of legionary settlement; indeed the site is marked on some of the old O.S. maps as a Roman villa. Could this have been the place from which timber was obtained from the extensive hardwood forest?

There is evidence in the river of what could have been a sandstone wharf and from here the wood could have been taken down the river to Holt in order to fire the kilns. Since the distance would be less than a mile this would seem to be quite possible as at this point the river flows very closely to the higher ground. In his 'Roman Cheshire' written in 1886 Thompson Watkin states that 'there seems to have been a villa of some size at Crewe, nearly opposite Holt, which was the residence of a person connected with the XX Legion. This, in addition to the fact that numerous Roman coins have been found at Holt and slight traces of earthworks on each side of the river, apparently indicates the existence of a Roman settlement'. This of course was written before the fact that Holt was the site of Bovium was established, but it does add weight to the theory that Farndon was populated in Roman times.



Barton Stocks

It is known that the growing of corn in England was developed in the later stages of the Roman occupation which spanned four centuries. It would seem probable therefore that such highly fertile areas as those in the vicinity of Farndon, Churton, and Aldford would have been included in such development in order to provide food for the inhabitants of both Holt and Chester. The firm establishment of a village society at Farndon also, in all probability, dates from this period.

There is one other piece of information that fits conveniently into this chapter since it relates, in part, to the Roman period. This is an old saying which is known and often quoted by all natives of the area and which runs:—

'Holt lions, Farndon bears,

Churton greyhounds and Aldford hares'.

The age of this saying is unknown, although it certainly appeared in print in the early years of the last century. Its meaning is also obscure although various theories have been put forward.

J. C. Bridge, who collected Cheshire Proverbs in 1917, commented that 'the people of Holt in Cheshire are so called by their neighbours on account of their quarrelsome characters, not without a sneer perhaps at their true courage'. An earlier writer, Thomas Pennant, conjectured on the Welsh name, Castell Lleon (the Castle of the Legion) and felt that the English borderers might mistake Lleon for the plural of Llew, a lion, and so call Holt the Castle of Lions. The *Diocesan History* (1895) however, is more positive, and its author (Rev. R. H. Morris) states that as late as the Elizabethan period the alternative name, Castrum Leonum or Castle of Lions was in general use; indeed its seal incorporated a Lion Rampant.

It would seem from this evidence therefore that 'Holt Lions' had heraldic origins and if this theory is correct is it not probable that 'bears', 'greyhounds' and 'hares' were also taken from the coats of arms of various local families? 'Bears' could possibly relate to the famous 'Bear and Ragged Staff of the Warwicks who certainly once held lands at Cholmondeley, but it is difficult to find connections for the 'greyhounds' and 'hares'. It can be said in support of this suggestion however that the base of the font in Holt church, which dates from 1490, includes what appear to be carvings of all these creatures.

This was examined by Mr. E. E. Dorling in 1908, and his findings were published in Vol. 24 of the Transactions of the Historical Soc. of Lanes. & Cheshire. He mentions a hart's (not a hares) head with reference to the house of Stanley, and considers that the collared hound sitting in a panel on the font is 'none other but the greyhound badge of King Henry VII'.

All this is of course speculation but perhaps a reader of these pages will provide an answer. For the present the true meaning of this local proverb must remain a mystery.

THE DARK AGES

410-1066

The six centuries which elapsed between the exodus of the Romans and the advent of the Normans are usually referred to as the Dark Ages; a very apt description since little enough is known of the history of Cheshire in that period, let alone the history of the parish of Farndon. The main source of information is the collection of chronicles known, in compliance with custom, as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and, sad to relate, this contains but one reference to Farndon.

Most of the entries concerning Chester ('a western city in Wirheal') refer to wars with the Welsh and in these, since the village was one of the few places where the Dee could be easily crossed, Farndon must inevitably have been involved in the fighting. Between 383 and 600 A.D. the country was invaded by the Irish Norse while, from the south, came invasions of Angles, Saxons, and Danes.

In the early part of the Dark Ages this area was part of Powysland, that, bounded south east by the Broxton Hills, included a large tract in Cheshire and Shropshire. Offa reduced Powysland to the western side of Offa's Dyke, and the Princes of Powys left their seat at Shrewsbury. This was an age of national unrest but gradually the English Kingdoms were formed and most of Cheshire was probably Mercia. It was after the Battle of Chester in 616 A.D. that the Mercian settlement along the Dee valley began. These were troubled times indeed and who is to say how Farndon suffered?

The one reference to this village in the Chronicle is dated A.D. 925 and reads: 'This year died King Edward at Farndon in Mercia'. Other writers record that it was while putting down an alliance between the Mercians of Cheshire and their hereditary enemies the Welsh that King Edward the Elder died at Farndon on 17th July 924 leaving the Kingdom of Wessex to his son Athelstan, who was recognised as King of Mercia. William of Malmesbury, writing in the twelfth century, also gives the year of the King's death as 924 and adds that 'he was struck down by disease'.

There is, therefore, some dispute regarding the date of the King's death and, in more recent times, historians have argued about where it actually took place. Farringdon in Berkshire has laid claim to the Royal distinction but this has been denied by writers in the Cheshire Sheaf of 1906. The Sheaf seems to conclude that the most likely spot was at Aldford Castle (then part of Farndon) and to support this (whilst admitting it may only be a coincidence) points out that the Church at Shocklach is dedicated to St Edith of Poleworth, probably a sister of Edward the Elder. All that can be said with certainty is that the King was buried at Winchester Cathedral.

There has always been a strong belief among antiquarians that there was a church in Farndon in Anglo-Saxon times and today this is generally accepted. Dr. Ormerod gives names of a large number of ancient churches in Cheshire omitted in Domesday.

'In Dudestan hundred Farndon had a church and two priests, one of whom doubtless related to the moiety of the manor, which subsequently constituted the village of Aldford'.

The location of this church is unknown but in all probability it would have stood within the fortifications of the village and would have been some sort of wooden or wattle structure. A writer at the beginning of the present century noted that 'there are still signs of the stone bastions that once defended the river ford. You can see at least two above the steps going up from the bridge entrance to the Hungry Hills. These are unquestionably part of the walls which surrounded the village'. It seems likely that the church would have stood within the compound.

In Cheshire there is no Roman indication of the prevalence of Christianity since all inscriptions on the tombstones of legionaries are dedicated to Dis Manibus—'to the gods of the shades'. But Rev. L. E. Owen conjectured that it was conceivable that the first Christian church was planted at Farndon, and a list of ancient dedications will perhaps throw light upon the early establishment of Christianity. In Cheshire the churches of Farndon, Tushingham, Over, Wybunbury, Chadkirk and Handforth are all dedicated to St. Chad.

It was in A.D. 669 that Chad, a missionary monk from the Abbey of Lastingham, became the first Bishop of the Kingdom of Mercia and made his headquarters at Lichfield. Cheshire, being a part of Mercia, came within Chad's jurisdiction, and remained a part of the Diocese of Lichfield until the Diocese of Chester was separated from it in 1541. Legend has it that Chad made extensive tours of his Diocese and founded churches wherever he went. It certainly seems likely that a Celtic version of Western Christianity reached Mercia shortly after the Battle of Chester.

Place names make an interesting study since most pre-date the Norman Conquest and any interpretations are therefore open to speculation. Dorothy Sylvester lists both Farndon and Crewe as being 'possible Celtic', while other local writers suggest that Ferandun is derived, perhaps, from Ver An (Ber On) a deity of the Ancient Britons, the divinity to whom the ferns, the ivy, and the yew were dedicated. *The Oxford Dictionary* translates the name as 'fern clad dun', and Mr. Dodgson, in his *Place-Names of Cheshire* as 'Fern Hill'. The meanings of the other townships are given by the last named writer as Barton (Barley farm), Churton (Church enclosure), Clutton (Farm at a hill), and Crewe (Hall at a weir or fish trap). Space does not allow for explanations of the derivations, but it should be pointed out that spellings vary considerably from century to century since these were first based on names spoken

rather than written. Early examples with dates are Berton (1318), Chyrton (1300), Clutone (1086), Cryu (1096), and Fearndune (924).

If only the facts had been recorded over this long period of time how much there would have been to say about Farndon. The coming of Christianity, wars with the Welsh, the firm establishment of a parish, and the death of a King in its midst. Even Ethelfrith, the pagan King of Northumbria, must have passed through when he invaded Wales in 613.

If only the *Chronicle* and the *Observer* had been in publication.

CONQUEST

1066-1400

The best remembered date in the history of England is 1066; the year of the Battle of Hastings and the coming of the Normans. It was about three years, however, before the conquerors reached the north west of the country, and it is generally accepted that Chester was occupied in 1070. The Norman line of advance is thought to have been from the east and as their forces poured across the countryside they plundered and laid waste many of the villages in their path. This devastation took place in the winter of 1069-70 and among the places so destroyed was Farndon; already of some prominence. Although in Norman times the village, which was included in the lands of the Bishop of Lichfield, was thought to have been in a wild state and of little value, it was estimated to have had a population of between 20 and 29 inhabitants; the same number as in Aldford and Gresford. With the exception of Acton, it seems likely that Aldford and Farndon had greater populations than any other villages in south Cheshire.

The Dark Ages were at last over and written records started to be kept which give a much more accurate picture of Farndon than was available hitherto. The first, and most important of these, was the result of a survey ordered by King William to inform him of the state of his realm. This came to be known as the Domesday Book of 1086 and it contains two references to Farndon.

(I) The Bishop himself holds Ferentone, and he held it in King Edward's time. There are four hides rateable to the gelt. The land is five carucates. Two are in the demesne and there are seven villeins with one carucate. There is a wood a league long and half a league broad. Of this land two priests hold of the Bishop a hide and a half. There is a carucate in the demesne and

there are two foreigners and two villeins and one bordar with one carucate and a half and four serfs. The priest of the vill has half a carucate and there are five bordars with one carucate. In King Edwards time the whole was worth forty shillings. It is now worth sixty shillings. It was waste.

(II) Bigot holds of Earl Hugh Ferentone. Earl Edwin held it. There are four hides rateable to the gelt. The land is eight carucates. Two are in the demesne and there are seven villeins and three bordars with two carucates. There are a mill and a fishery there with two fishermen and an acre of meadow. In King Edwards time it was worth forty shillings now six shillings. The Earl found it waste.

So a picture of Farndon in 1086 can be put together, although the original meanings of some of the terms used, especially measurements, can only be presumed. A hide or carucate is the name used for the amount of land that could be cultivated by one plough in a year; thought to be between 60 and 180 acres in area depending on the quality of the land. The demesne refers to the land held by the lord of the manor for his own use. A bordar was a person who held his home and land on condition he supplied some of his produce to the lord of the manor, and a villein was one of the common people. Gelt is the Saxon term for money. A league is thought to measure two to three miles which would indicate that a considerable area of Farndon was woodland or else a league was smaller than is thought. The first entry supposedly refers to the present Farndon Parish and the second to Aldford.

Even at this time, because of its proximity to Wales, Cheshire was an area of military importance. It was a strategic base and a constant source of manpower and was not even considered to be a part of England but rather a separate area ruled over by an Earl. It even had its own customs and laws. The first Earl, in the time of William the Conqueror, was Hugh D'Avaranches (1071-1101), a nephew of the King, and he and his descendants enjoyed regal status in the County until the death of John the Scot in 1237 at which time the Earldom became vested in the crown.

Farndon became one of the three places of secular sanctuary designated by Earl' Hugh (often referred to as Hugh Lupus) in Cheshire; the other two being at Hoole and Rudheath. In these places he extended the Earl's Peace to many men who were in trouble elsewhere. At Farndon the area became known as King's Marsh or Overmarsh and was a place where criminals could seek refuge and, on payment of a fine to the Earl, could claim his protection. Outlaws could remain there for one year and one day provided that when they arrived they could raise a rude hovel in a night, without the use of nails or pins, and have the chimney smoking before dawn. Around King's Marsh was a ditch which marked the limits of safety. Later, in 1379, John Leche, who was the King's surgeon, was granted Overmarsh for life by the King in

lieu of his salary. In 1385 the lease was granted to Ughtred de Huxley for three years at £13 per annum. The name of this man appears in a list of those compensated for their injuries at the battle of Radcot Bridge in December 1387.

The gradual incorporation of these outlaws and criminals into the surrounding population, already toughened by war, produced some of the men who, in the reign of Richard II, were both feared and hated in other parts of England.

One form of treachery of these times was later to become a legend in the area and is said by some to be the basis of the fairy tale of *Babes in the Wood*.

When the Welsh Prince Madoc died during the reign of Edward I (1272-1307) his two young sons aged eight and ten years were left under the guardianship of Roger Mortimer and the Earl of Warren. The guardians conspired to take the children's estates for themselves and murdered the little princes by dropping them over Farndon bridge and drowning them in the Dee. On stormy nights their terrified cries are said to be heard echoing beneath the arches.

The original tale was that two fairies had been drowned but the truth was revealed by the finding of a manuscript in the Bodleian Library late in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately the present bridge was not built until around 1345 and there is no evidence of an earlier construction, but nevertheless the legend is ancient and was commemorated in verse by Egerton Leigh in his *Cheshire Ballads* of 1866. The last two verses run:

Belated travellers quake with fear, And
spur their starting horse; For childish
shrieks, they say, they hear As Farndon's
Bridge they cross.

Two fairy forms, all clothed in white,
Still hovering o'er the Dee, At midnight
oft by pale moonlight The ghost-struck
rustics see.

A good indication of village life is given in an interesting document of 1290 referring to the valuation of the manor of Farndon. In it are listed names of tenants, the amount of land they held, and their annual payments to the lord of the manor. The list is extensive but (for example) 'Hugh, sone of John held one messuage and half a bovate of land and one acre and paid 19d. annually. Philip Bigge held two messuages and one and a half bovates of land and paid annually 3/4d.'

It also states that the crossing 'is worth one mark' annually which would seem to indicate that there was in 1290 some form of ford or ferry across the Dee, but no bridge. It mentions a wood of 14 acres which supports the Domesday Survey recording of a substantial

area of woodland. There were three acres of meadow belonging in common to the town and four wild fowling places, presumably on the banks of the Dee. It also states that panage, the free grazing of pigs, rarely occurs, although an entry in a similar survey of the manor of Tarvin in 1298 states that 'the men of Farndone shall give Id. for each pig in the time of panage'.

In total the tenants listed in the survey of the manor of Farndon held thirty two and a half bovates of land and when any one of them died the lord would claim a third part of his goods.

Other documents referring to Farndon and its inhabitants can also be found. One, dated 1293, records Robert, son of Philip de Farendon, and Richard his brother as defendants in a suit for dower (the widow's part of an estate) by Henry del Mere and Angaret, his wife. A David de Barton and Thomas Little of Farndon together with Richard Boleyn and William de Churton witnessed a document during the reign of Edward II (1307-27). Around the same period Thomas Ball, son of William, son of Philip de Farendon granted lands in Codington to John FitzRobert de Codington. Thomas Ball again occurs in records dating 1322 as Thomas de Farendon, when at that time he, with his wife Agnes, held tenements in Codington and Barton. There is also a reference to a smithy in the centre of the village being in existence in 1300. In 1396 Ralph de Bellew and Thos. de Bellew owned Church Farm, and the church is mentioned in a document of the period.

At this time Edward, the Black Prince, held lands in Cheshire. All his legal transactions and his instructions to his ministers were recorded and these have now been compiled to form The Black Prince's Register. In the third volume are some references to Farndon. There is a petition dated 18th May 1351 from Roger, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, asking that the 120-acre plot called Overmarsh be returned 'to the hands of the church as the Prince's ministers had claimed it for the Prince. In August 1352 there is mention of a dispute between the Dean of St John's Chester and his canons and vicars over the administration and tithes of Farndon church. On May 2nd 1365 the Black Prince gave an order for a long service annuity of £10 to be made to John de Farendon, his yeoman, who was prevented by disease of the eyes from serving him.

During the fourteenth century Farndon was not the healthy place that it is today. Sickness and even plague were commonplace. The most severe visitation came in 1349 with the Black Death; so named from the mortality which marked its path. The towns with their bad sanitation were the worst afflicted but even the surrounding villages were not unaffected. Indeed the Black Death is thought to have killed almost one third of the population of Western Europe.

It swept through the Farndon area with extreme suddenness in June of that year and continued unabated until mid-September. Nobody was safe and in some parishes, even in this short space of

time, incumbents changed several times. In nearby Tilston, for example, there were three different incumbents in 1349. Clergy could not always be found to fill vacancies and services were hampered. Those villages which had preachers were told that the pestilence was 'the messenger of Heaven to punish the wickedness of men' and it is hardly surprising that this announcement encouraged people to give up hope and to turn to immorality in despair. The large number of deaths and the general atmosphere of apathy of course resulted in work on the land not being completed and the harvests rotted in the fields. The struggle was intensified by the return of soldiers from the French Wars who retreated to Overmarsh and other sanctuaries in Cheshire. Such men were not only a burden in that they required to be fed, but they also caused trouble to the local inhabitants by carrying off womenfolk for ransom. It was hardly surprising that the aftermath of the disease resulted in an uprising due to the high cost of provisions. No figures for Farndon are available but it is interesting to note that the population of nearby Holt in 1315 numbered 650 but had dwindled to a mere 300 by 1391.

During the period covered by this chapter the most important personages in the parish must have been the Parson and the Lord of the Manor. In neither instance, however, is much information available.

The Shakerley manuscripts refer once (in 1321) to 'Robert son of Richard the chaplain of Farndon', and Ormerod says that 'William, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry is stated to have held the manor of Farndon from the Lord Prince, as Earl of Chester, in right of his bishopric'. This was in 1496 when the value was £10.9.8d. Ormerod adds that there was 'perhaps an early subinfeudation of part of this manor, or probably the manor was formed by several of the neighbouring lords as lessees of the bishops; and by one of these the local name was acquired as early as the thirteenth century'.

The first mention of the Barnston family that has been so closely connected with Farndon in recent centuries is in 1293 when Hugh de Berneston was 'lord of a moiety of Berneston (in Wirral)'. The first date for a descendant connected with Churton is that of 'Robert de Berneston of Chirton' in 1380. It should be added that the Crewes (Crues) of Crewe by Farndon were of that place from the reign of Richard II (1377-1399) until the death of Samuel Crue in 1770. They were related to the Crewes of Crewe Hall in the middle of Cheshire.



The Nags Head, Farndon

PLANTAGENET AND TUDOR

1400-1600

Little is known of the history of Farndon during the Wars of the Roses and in the early part of the Tudor period but the very absence of any information is a sign that it was spared the ravages of those troubled times. However, much of Cheshire remained loyal to the deposed Richard II, and although Henry IV issued a general pardon, 26 men, including David Bostock of Churton, were considered too dangerous and were omitted from it.

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Chester was still under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield and was to remain so until the See of Chester was founded during the Reformation in 1541. Likewise, little is known regarding the priests in charge of Farndon Church at this time and what is known is merely a reference to a few names. The first priests whose names are mentioned are Richard Rawlinson, Edward Blaker, Richard Madoke and John Bostock; the last three about the year 1541. In addition, there is an inscription in Latin in Ormerod's work to the effect that 'This Bell Tower was made in the year of the Lord, 1412, in the time of Richard Rawlins, Rector'; this is doubtless the same person who is also named as Rawlinson.

In the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII the Rectorial tithes of Farndon amounted to £10 per annum, and in 1539 'Farndon Church with lands and glebes, with Chapel of Saint Helen, in lands and grain and oblationum communibus (collections from the congregation)' were worth £14 per annum. A chantry lamp burnt in the Church and would appear to have been kept burning until the reign of Edward VI.

In the reign of Henry VII, William, Bishop of Lichfield, was said to have held the Manor of Farndon in right of his Bishopric from 'the Lord Prince as Earl of Chester'.

Following the founding of the See of Chester in 1541 when Farndon Parish now, as a result, came under the Archbishopric of York, rather more details are available. For example, in 1542, a lease was entered into between the Dean and Chapter of the College of St. John's Chester and Richard Hough Esq., for the Rectorial tithes of Farndon, 'Dr. Richard Madoke, ex stipendiis of John Bostoke of Farndon'.

The above references confirm the names of three of the early rectors whose names above are given. The first rector for whom more reliable and specific dates are available is Richard Williamson who was rector from 1573 to 1603.

After the dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, the township of Crewe by Farndon which had belonged to the Abbot of Chester also became vested in the Crewe family of Holt (a name still commemorated by a side chapel in Holt Church) who were a younger branch of the Crewes of Crewe Hall.

As far as property in Farndon was concerned, in 1509, Ralph Egerton, a gentleman and usher of the King's Chamber, had land and a mill in Farndon. The said Ralph Egerton was also Keeper of the Manor of Ridley during the King's pleasure. There is a description of the village itself in Daniel King's *Vale Royal* which states 'We came to Farndon where there is a fair new Church and the town itself a handsome continued street reaching down to the foot of an exceeding fair stone bridge, built (no doubt) together with that old substantial castle in the Holt, the bridge being the only partition between the two towns and the River Dee, dividing a corner of Denbyshire from the County of Cheshire'. Although *Vale Royal* was first published in 1656 the first part of it, including this description, was written by William Smith about 1585.

In 1575, another reference to Farndon in the will of John Yardley of Caldecott and Farndon states 'I wish to be buried in Farndon Churchyard', while the Cheshire Crown Revenues of 1559-1560 refers to 'lands in Farndon for the finding of a light, 8d. from Hugh Hawkins out of his lands for the finding of a light in the said Church, 8d.'.

As in the fourteenth century life expectancy was not high and disease struck frequently. 1550 was the year of the sweating sickness, an affliction which affected the heart and liver and which was referred to by Farndon's most illustrious son, John Speed, who wrote of the sickness 'wherein died infinite numbers of men in their best strength, which followed only Englishmen in forraine countreys, no other people infected therewith, whereby they were both feared and shunned in all places where they came'. Death frequently occurred within an hour of the onset of the disease.

However, the history of Farndon at the end of the sixteenth century is, to a large extent, overshadowed by that of the said John Speed whose name is today commemorated in a road in the village. There is controversy regarding the actual house in which he was born, and, in fact, the house which is at times pointed out as his birthplace was probably built closer to the date of his death than to that of his birth which was 1552. He was the son of a merchant tailor and was himself brought up in the trade, being admitted to the Worshipful Company of Merchant Taylors in London in 1580. He married and settled in Moorfields where he rented premises and a garden from the Livery Company at 20 shillings per annum. He took over further adjacent land from the same company at a further £2 per annum, built a house and settled down to the work which made him famous and to producing a family of, it is said, 21 children. In 1614, doubtless to accommodate his growing family, he acquired still more land on lease of a prebendal estate held by the Merchant Taylor's Company from St. Paul's Cathedral. This latest piece of land was obtained largely through the good offices of Sir Fulk Grenville, later Lord Brett, and, in his 'Treatise of Empire', John Speed expressed his gratitude to the noble Lord

'whose merits to me-ward I do acknowledge in setting this hand free from the daily employments thus to express the inclination of my mind, himself being the procurer of my present estate'. Sir Fulk's patronage of John Speed extended over a considerable number of years since, in 1598, he had secured for him a waiter's room in the Customs House.

Speed, who was really a historian, took up cartography in his spare time, presenting maps to Queen Elizabeth I in 1598 and to the Merchant Taylor's Company in 1600. In drawing his maps, he did not do any surveying himself but used work already done by others or, as he expressed it in a more picturesque way, 'I have put my siclle into other men's corn'. However, he did not fail to acknowledge his sources and always revised his work where necessary. The maps were engraved by a gentleman who rejoiced in the name of Jodocus Hondius Senior, and later, during the Civil War, they were used by both Royalists and Parliamentarians. Wrapped in vellum covers and of a size such as would fit into a coat pocket, they were described as being 'usefull for all Commanders for quarterings of Soldiers and all sorts of persons who would be informed where the armies be'.

In later life, Speed was elected to the Society of Antiquaries and wrote the *History of Great Britain under the Conquests of the Romans, Saxons, Danes and Normans* which was dedicated to James I and published first in 1611. Several other editions were published later. He also wrote *Genealogies recorded in Sacred Scripture*, again about 1611, and *A Cloud of Witnesses . . . confirming unto us the Truth of the Histories in God's Most Holie Worde* (1616). In his latter years Speed went blind, but despite this, and his suffering from gallstones, he continued to write. His *Prospect of the most famous Parts of the World* which was published in 1627 was the first general atlas produced by an Englishman and was a very popular work in its time. Further innovations were the plans of county towns which were inserted on the maps. He died on the 28th July 1629 and was buried in St. Giles, Cripplegate.

There are very few references to Farndon in any of Speed's writings but there is one reference to a visit to the Church in order to have access to the tower to view 'the land that is afar off. Nothing could have been further from his mind at the time than the notion that, in the reign of Charles I, the Parliamentarians would be doing precisely the same thing with the help of his maps in order to confound the Royalist armies.

The Speed family retained its connections with the village and the surrounding area for many years longer and a Speed was Churchwarden at Farndon in the eighteenth century.

Meanwhile, as Speed was in London associating with the Court and the quality, back on his native heath some of his fellow villagers were disporting themselves in more reprehensible albeit

equally pleasurable activities. In the Visitation Articles of 1554, 1556, and 1557., there are references to repairs to the Church and to the sins of parishioners. These latter were mostly offences against morality—fornication, adultery, disagreement between husbands and wives and the like. In Chester, the parishes of Astbury, Middlewich and Farndon were said to have the highest number of offences in the first of these categories. The penalties were intended to make the parties concerned disinclined to repeat the offences, consisting as they did of fines and also public penance to be done by both parties. This was done in Church on two, three, or four Sundays, depending no doubt on the severity of the offences. The penance involved the wearing of a long linen shroud, with a placard on the breast detailing the nature of the offence for the edification and enjoyment of those of the onlookers who could read. The sinners walked up the Church barefooted and bareheaded, and carrying lighted candles they asked for God's pardon. Another crime which enjoyed a certain vogue at the time was forgery but the pleasures of this were restricted to those of the congregation who were literate.

While solving Henry VIII's early matrimonial problems, the break of the English Church with Rome created many other problems, one of them being for those people who felt they could not go along with the new Church but still retained their allegiance to the Pope—the Recusants. The percentage of these in the country was not great by the late sixteenth century, but in 1592, of 8,512 recusants in the country as a whole, 2,442 came from Lancashire and Cheshire, with most from Lancashire. In Cheshire many parishes had no recusants, but most of the cases that were recorded were 'on the Welsh border in Holt, Farndon and Worthenbury'. Elizabeth Salisbury, the wife of John Salisbury of Farndon, was presented at the Diocesan Visitation of 1598 when she and her husband were reported as recusants whose child had not been christened at the Parish Church. In 1590 the widow Salisbury, aged 80 and doubtless of the same family, was also presented at the Visitation for seldom coming to Church. What happened to the recusants subsequently is not recorded although an unsubstantiated report does suggest that the famous Guy Fawkes himself visited Holt around this period. The presence of a large number of recusants in the area could certainly have provided an attraction for one of the leading lights in the Gunpowder Plot.

At the end of the sixteenth century, Farndon, like hundreds of other villages throughout the land, continued its existence dominated by the changes of the seasons rather than by other external events. It could certainly have had no suspicion of the turbulent events of the Civil War in which it was to be involved within the next 40 years; events which were to bring in the outside world in ways more dramatic than any which had so far affected its history.

CIVIL WAR

1600-1700

The researchers into the history of Farndon have not been particularly successful in their quest for a description of the parish in the seventeenth century. As already pointed out, John Speed himself left no geographical details, and even the route from Nantwich to Wrexham was ignored by John Ogilby in his *Britannia* of 1675. This was a description of the principal roads in England and Wales and included several in other parts of Cheshire. In spite of its relatively high population in previous centuries, it might therefore be concluded from these facts that Farndon itself was of little consequence by 1600, and was only of importance because of the bridge which linked it with Holt.

However, thanks to various records, some facts concerning the lives of the parish inhabitants do emerge; although in the first 40 years of the century, there are few of any importance to those living outside its boundaries. Indeed village life in Farndon during the first 40 years of the century appeared to have been as quiet as in any other rural community and to have followed the usual pattern of birth, marriage and death.

The first funeral in this period was in 1601 of 'Incumbent Bradleye's dawghter buyred in Farndon churchyarde'. 'Incumbent Bradleye' was Mr. Oates Bradley who was curate of Farndon from 1601-1630.

Written evidence of these sad and joyful events are chronicled in 'The Parish of Farndon Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1601-1719' which is kept in the Records Office at Chester Castle. The entry on the first page of the leather bound volume states it to be 'A true and perfect register of all Christings, Marriages and Burrialls, begyning the Eighteenth of May Anno Domi 1603 and in the first year of our Sovereigne Kyng, King James the First, for the parish of Farnedon wrytten by Oates Bradleye, minster and preacher of the said parish'. The first christening in this period is of 'William Williamson sonne of Williams Williamson who was Baptized in July 1603'.

Some of those mentioned in the early registers bore the names of those who lived in the parish during the twentieth century. For example, there is an entry for a 'Fletcher' wedding in 1609.

From another source—the list of Cheshire Recusants—'Jane, wife of Robert Corden was fined for not attending church within six months after the 26th march 1610—£20 a month'.

From the Parish Register of Shocklach the following appears '1626—Francis Clubbe, the reputed basse sonne of Hugh Clubbe of Farndon and of Maadleyne Harries was born under a hedge within the parish of Holt and because ytt was tongue tydd it was brought to be christened and cutt, the nyne and twentieth day of January'.

The names of the Gentry of the district at this period occur in various wills, the earliest of which is that of Richard Grosvenor of Eaton in 1626—'To the poor of Farndon £5. Whereas I purchased two bands of ground in Farndon of one Thomas Yerdly, upon part whereof that barn of mine lately now stands my Will is that the said land and barn shall pass in the same manner as my purchase of Farndon tithes and my lease of coal, stone and lead to the benifit of my daughters'.

The Will of George Bostock of Churton, Esq., 'sicke in bodie' dated 24th November 1619, proved in Chester 20th January 1621 by Anne the widow and relict, states that he 'desires to be buried in Fame Church in the Chancell there, and leaves said church 20/-'. The will goes on to state 'I was drawn to sell sundrie of my land towards the paiment of my sonne George's debts and it was agreed that I should have lands past by my sonne unto me whereby I might raise £600 for my younger children'. The land mentioned was sold to 'John Massey of Coddington, Esq., George Bostock of Hoult, Esq., Thomas Welkinson of Fame, Gentelman'. Although the will was proved in 1621 it was not till 1639 that the inquisition was taken possibly due to the complicated matter of the land.

His son George Bostock (for whose benefit the land was sold) is possibly the George Bostock buried in Farndon in 1652. It is believed he married twice, his first wife being Katherine Whitmore of Thursaston, and she died on the 8th May 1632 and is buried at Aldford.

From documents of the Record Society it is noted that in 1622 Sir Peter Warburton 'owned land bought from Thomas Yardley, 4 a of land, 3 a of meadow in Farndon'. In 1623 Arthur Starkey is recorded as owning land in Farndon. In the Inquisition of the will of Sir Richard Egerton, taken in 1629, it states 'he seised in fee' of several manors and lands including that of a 'mess and windmill and 40 a of land in Farndon'. An extract from the will of 'Doritye Caulveley, Spinster' mentions money 'oweing me of Thomas Clube of Farndon, due by Bonnd upon St. Migheles Day next £7.14s.'. In the will of William Barnston of Churton dated 1663, he leaves a legacy towards the repairs of Farndon Church after the ravages of the Civil War, which, he explains, is a small one 'having done well therein already'. The land owned by him in the district included 'Sibboths field' (known today as Sibbersfield). He desires to be buried 'in the Chancel at the upper end of the south aisle in Fame Church under a gravestone there already for myself'.

The reference to a 'windmill' in the previous paragraph is interesting. An estate map of 1735 shows that at that time the first stretch of Churton Road was known as Windmill Lane and the area of land beyond the present school was known as Windmill Flatts. Presumably the mill itself stood in this area.

The first years of the seventeenth century were not of course without incident, and almost certainly the inhabitants of the parish

must have been affected by the plague which struck in the Chester area in September 1602 and lasted until 1605. During this period the Assizes were moved from Chester to Nantwich. A further outbreak in 1631 prevented the annual fair being held in the city, and again, in 1648, it was reported that in Chester conditions were so grave that 'grass grew in the streets'. Although Farndon is not specifically mentioned, it is known that from time to time it was necessary to fumigate surrounding churches with the burning of pitch.

Whatever the effects of the sickness, however, they can not have been so devastating as the ravages and sufferings of the Civil War which began in 1643 when the ancient bridge assumed its greatest importance in its long history as Royalists and Roundheads strove to control the passage over the Dee. Because of its prominence on a hilltop overlooking the river the parish church of Farndon was garrisoned by Roundhead troops from 1643 to 1645 which enabled watch to be kept on the Welsh village of Holt and particularly on the castle there which was occupied by the enemy. It is said that Puritan soldiers stabled their horses in Farndon church in 1645. Throughout Cheshire during these troubled years many villages suffered in one way or another, but because of the importance of the bridge Farndon probably suffered more than most.

Several accounts of the fighting which took place in and around Farndon during the Civil War exist, the first account of which is from Malbon's 'Memorial of the Civil War'—'On Monday 12th June 1643 some companies of Dragonners marched from their garrison at Nantwich towards Holt (it being the day of the Fair) and in Farndon gave them an alarm which frightened them not a little. But they bended their course towards Shocklach where they took 98 oxen and many horses and at night returned with them to Nantwich. Upon Ash Wednesday at night some of the Parliamentary forces from Emral Hall set out with 40 horses and musketeers intending to take the enemy in their quarters at Farndon but they heard of the plan in time to set an ambush. So when the Roundheads arrived at Farndon the town held no soldiers. The Kings forces surrounded the town and took all of the foot soldiers and some of horses with all their arms. On Tuesday 20th October 1643 Major Croxton, Capt. Lair and another Captain together with their companies and a troop of horses went to Farndon where Col. Egerton and some other companies were quartered. (Like Acton, Bathomley and Middlewich Farndon Church was used as a garrison during the War and sadly abused). At Farndon they killed three or four and took about 50 prisoners and returned safely to Nantwich'.

The following is an eyewitness account of the battle which took place on the Bridge on 11th November 1643. It was discovered in a cupboard in the library at Welbeck Abbey in 1885 and was addressed to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

'Wee drewe out (probably from Nantwich) upon Tuesday last, five Cheshire foote companies and three or foure troopes of horse and three or foure companies of countrey dragooners, which were all we could spare—consideringe them at Stafford and att Wem—wherewith their joined five companies of Lancashire foote and one or two troopes of horse and one or two companies of dragooners, under the command of Colonell John Booth and Lieut. Colonell Peter Egerton, about twoe hundred foote, and one troope of horse of Sir Thomas Myddelton's, with which wee advanced that night to FARNE, which is a little towne on the Cheshire side—over against the Holt in Wales wherein the enemy kept a garrison in the castle, and had contracted all the strengthe and powre of (North) Wales for our resistance, for which purpose they runge their bells backward, and fired the beacons throughout (North) Wales, for which end they read alsoe made a towre and drawbridge and stronge gates upon the bridge, soe as both they and wee conceived it verie difficulte, if not altogether ympossible, to make way for our passage over the bridge, and therefore our design was to face them upon the bridge, and in the meane tyme to attempt by boates to lande over some of our foote, to prevent which our enemy was so watchfull and circumspect as that they placed their ambuseadoes in the hedges, and soe soone as our boates appeared on the water they gave fire and beate our men from their boates, soe as wee were in much danger to loose them, when there remayned unto us noe other way but to march downe the riverside with our foote towards some carriages of ours, wherein wee had turnells, which we had purposely provided to amaze the enemy—as though we had intended to have forced our passage there alsoe. To interrupt and prevent which intended designe of ours they brought their foote all alonge the riverside soe farre remote from the bridge as that they gave us the opportunitye to make a desperate assault upon the bridge by placeinge ladders to the toppe of the drawbridge and cuttinge the ropes.

Which beinge done and the bridge falling downe wee had accesse to the gates and casting over some hand granadoes amongst the Welsh men—who there remayned—which strucke such a terror into them as that they all run away and could not be obtained to returne'. . . The enemy flye apace and begin to remove all their goodes out of these partes but Holt Castle holdes out, and is beseidged'.

To this day a part of the river on the Farndon side is known as the 'Hungry Hills' and a story is told that the women of Farndon climbed down a path in the sandstone and forded the river to take food to the men in the beseiged Castle. Yet another extract from *Malbon and Burghall's Civil Wars Memorial* printed in 1889.

'On Thursday the 20th of February 1644 the Prince came to Chester where the Parliament army faced him that he durst not come further: but he returned to the Holte in Wales, and on Ffrydaye made a Brydge of Boats over Dye under Holte Castle

- before the Cheshire forces were awarre, and about fyve hundred of their came over into Cheshire, but the Cheshire soldiers in Fame did quycklie beate them backe. On Sunday mornynge 23rd Ffebruary 1644(5) the Kings pte came over into Ffarne
- agayne and their fyred twoe houses which weire burned down to the ground and retyned backe agayne doeing no more harme, but sevrall times afterwards theye came over agayne and burned many houses and barnes in Ffarne and beinge sett on by the soldyes in Ffarne weire beaten backe, yett they slewe Major Jackson and some other of them in Ffarne with some loose on their side by the p'tairn forces'.

Some of the suffering of the citizens of Farndon is starkly expressed in a petition of William Sharpe of Farndon which states that 'he had taken from him by the Cavaliers in corn, cattle and goods to the value of £60 and suffered seven weeks imprisonment in a dungeon at Chester. He lost all his goods for four years together being worth about £10 a year and in the time of the siege of Holt Castle had eight bays of buildings destroyed and about four score trees pulled down and destroyed from his grounds, for as the poor man who has formerly lived in esteem and was able to supply himself and family and to relieve others is now fallen into extreme misery and like to perish for want of means to relieve himself.

In 1643/44 a list was drawn up of the Clergy in Cheshire who were sequestered for refusing the Covenant. About 30 were named but Farndon was not amongst them. In nearby Aldford however, the Rector, Mr. Eaton, said he was 'dispossessed by a party of soldiers who most barborously carried out his wife and placed her on a dunghill where they so much insulted her and abused her that she grew distracted and died in that condition'.

Farndon Church had been burned during the fighting and in 1646 in August the Committee of Plundered Ministers 'have assigned £50 a year out of the imppriacon of Ffarndon sequestr-ed to the minister of Ffarndon'. 'Sir Richard Grosvenor by Deed 15th December 1646 hath settled the Rectorie of Fame and alias Farndon of the value £130 per annum upon George Booth Esq., in trust for the Ministers of such places as the Committee of Goldsmiths Hall shall appoint for ever'.

In 1646—'On this day Thomas Mottram Constable two mises (rates) one for the building of a munt in the view of the castell of Holt for to keep them better in'. The word 'munt' refers to the Mount Field where the cannon were placed which fired across the river at Holt Castle. In the late nineteenth century a cannon ball was dug up in the Mount Field near the brickyard. On the 15th January 1647 Holt Castle surrendered. It was dismantled and the

stones were used for the building of Eaton Hall. A receipt states 'Paid by Thomas Burton geattinge and carrunge of the stones of Houlte Cstle to Eaton Boat att the ratte of tou shillings sixpence ye turn 8th November 1675 payd Boatmen of Farndon in earnest of theyr bargaine July 10th £1'.

In 1646 England was declared to be a Protestant country under the strict edicts of the Roundheads and it was only at the Restoration in 1660 that the Church of England returned to its well ordered services. On the 8th October in 1661 the Cheshire Clergy gave a 'free and voluntary present to the King'. That of Thomas Marler of Farndon amounted to 13s. 4d'.

During the Protectorate, which lasted from 1649 to 1660, the villages of Cheshire managed to undertake a considerable amount of building and restoration work which had become necessary due to the recent fighting. In this, and although many had suffered financially, the lead was often taken by the land-owning families. A list of the 'Gentry for the Broxton Hundred' was published by Daniel King in his *Vale Royall of England* in 1656.

Barton Robert Croket, Roger Dodd
 Churton. Robert Bostock, John Hanky, William
 Barnston, Christopher Lowe
 Crewe John Stringer, John Crewe
 Farndon John Yardley
 Coddington. Thomas Hulme, John Massy
 Carden. Ralph Leech

Several of these appear in various subscription lists for this parish during the period.

Farndon Church was repaired in 1658 and the bells recast. A list of 13 subscribers for that date shows amounts from 4d. to 4/-including Jane Clubbe (4d.), John Rowlands (2/6), John Powel of ye Commonwood (2/6), Thomas Walker of Churton (3/6) Edward Ince (1/-). In the same year a further list exists of 'the names of such as did freely contribute to the casting of bells and repayre of the church, and what every man particularly gave thereto in the year 1658'. It was collected by Ralph Minshall and William Clubbe, Churchwardens. The Chomondeleys, The Grosvenors, the Barnstons and the Caldicotts are amongst a list of 20 subscribers from the Parish and other places such as Nantwich and Holmes Chapel. In this list the amounts range from 5/0 up to £10.00.

In 1672 on a 'Board of Benefaction' fixed to the church wall there is 'A catalogue of Benefactors to ye Poore of ye Parish of Farndon'. Amongst the 24 names on this almost undecipherable list are Robert Woodward of Farndon, gent . . . £10.00, Thomas Wilcocks of Farndon . . . £2.00, Joyce Clubbe of Farndon widd. . . . £1.00, John Palin of Farndon . . . £1.00, John Clubbe of ye Staires in Farndon . . . £10.00, Francis Clubbe of ye Staires, widd. . . . £20.00, John Dutton, Late Schoolmaster of Farndon . . . £5.00, Mr. Wm. Barnston of Farndon . . . £7.00.

The names of a few of the Clergy of Farndon have already been mentioned and the only other notes regarding them come from a pamphlet on the village written by J. P. Pearce and Dudley Morrison in 1934. They report that Richard Broughton was charged with the payment (or collection) of King Charles' 'Ship Money' in 1635, and that he 'ran away and joined the army' during the Civil War. The church records state after his name 'whereas the curacy of Farndon is at present destitute of a minister and Mr. Thomas Martin—minister of the Word, hath offered'. Thomas Marler was the incumbent from about 1656 to 1685 and was buried in the churchyard in 1691. In the 'Burials' of 1678 mention is made of the practice of wrapping corpses in woollens ('Byrid in Wol'). This was a custom of Charles II reign in order to increase the sale of wool, but mourners could pay a fine if they preferred to use linen.

The only seventeenth century description of the parish comes again from *Vale Royal*. From this it would seem that the Barnstons and the Bostocks were the most prominent families in the neighbourhood, although the 1664 Hearth Tax Roll (see Appendix) does indicate some large properties in Farndon township.

THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

(1700-1800)

After the turmoil of the Civil Wars Farndon, along with the rest of the County, entered the eighteenth century on a more muted note. True, in Europe, Marlborough was fighting the French and winning the victories of the reign of Good Queen Anne, but for all the direct affects that they had on this small village on the Welsh border they might as well have occurred in outer space.

By-the year 1700, the spelling of the place name was approaching its modern form after the several changes it had undergone. According to Cox, who was writing a County history over 100 years later, in 1700 it was spelt *Farnton*.

However the name was spelt, the quieter times of the eighteenth century provided their share of interest in the petty crime with which some of the villagers enlivened the routine of their days and in the punishments which were meted out when the misdemeanours in question were discovered. The sources of knowledge for these are the Poor Book (1740-1783), the Constables Book (1723-1766) and the Parish Book (1744-1781).

The Poor Book starts with a list of the names of the Overseers of the Poor for the years 1740-1783 although the actual entries only begin in 1764. The duties of the Overseers (who appear to have been elected for a period of six months only) were many and varied.

They included such interesting functions as patching up runaway marriages, providing cakes and mulled ale for the 'gossips' (sponsors) at christenings, 'tobacco for ye old woman', and, sadly, 'a sack coffing for ye pauper's childe'. Some of the entries in the Constable's Book refer to duties in connection with making arrests as, for example, the expenses incurred in taking 'William Carter and detaining him until a bond was given' which amounted to 3/6d. The making of the bond itself was somewhat more costly, amounting to 4/-, while the expenses of going to Aldersey for the warrant for the said gentleman were 6d. Vagrancy, which may possibly have referred to gypsies, also finds its place in the book and an entry for 1783 reads: 'to relieving a vagrant woman and child . . . 4/-'.

The Constables Book gives a list of the Constables in Farndon, and many of these are names which are still common in the area. (Such as: Baker, Clubb, Barnston, Huxley, Ince, Dodd, Minshall, Palin, Parry, Rowland and Youd). It also includes a record of accounts for the maintenance of the highways, the expenses for attending monthly meetings, donations to the poor, payments to destitute persons passing through the village, the window tax and, again, the bringing of wrongdoers to justice.

As a punishment for those unlucky enough to be caught, and as a warning to the rest, the stocks were frequently used during this period. There is a record of stocks being bought which, with their irons and locks cost 19/6d. In 1724 the 'stocks were returned' (it is not known from where) at a cost of 8^sAd. Possibly it may be thought that they had been so effective in Farndon that they had been lent to less fortunate neighbours in an attempt to curb local crime. If so the improvement in Farndon can only have been temporary for, in 1727, the Constables bought two truncheons at a cost of 1/- and had them painted for 2/-. Vagrancy was a continual problem in this century when the poor had to be supported by the parish. A vagrant tailor, for example, was removed at a cost of 15/6 which, presumably, was less expensive.

The Constables Book also testifies to the lasting popularity of a pastime which, in the absence of more sophisticated pleasures, must have played a large part in the life of the village—namely the use of the Scold's Bridle.

A local poet records that 'Chester presents Walton with a Bridle, to curb women's tongues that talk too idle'. Who or where Walton was is not revealed but it is interesting to speculate on the occupation of a 'Scold Muzzier' whose duty it was to apply the Bridle to offenders, with all its attendant dangers of bitten fingers and scratched cheeks. Warnings appear in the pages of the Book in the form of pithy little proverbs such as 'Death is the dread of Guilt' and 'Humility leads to Honour,' the latter presumably being applicable to the Scolds after they had been suitably shamed and chastened.

In 1774 there are more references to vagrants including an entry on 1st May which states that 'E.R. shall have no weekly pay as long as she continues to lodge strolling people'. In 1780, someone with a nice sense of sarcasm records a payment to 'James C. to pay his rent and encourage the said C to get drunk and abuse people'.

The Parish Book of 1744 to 1781 was really a record of Churchwarden's and General Church accounts, but among the entries were certain references to minor wrongdoings and nuisances. In 1768 the Book showed that the Dog Whipper was paid 13/4d. for carrying out his duties.

A reference to a more serious crime appears in the Chester Courant of the 10th October 1750 which reports: 'Stolen on the 3rd out of the Townfield at Farndon, a light bay horse. Notice to John Pratt of Farndon'. In an age when hanging was the remedy for most crimes, the stocks and truncheons would have been too mild a punishment for the thief if he had been caught.

Apart from the crimes and punishments the Registers provide" interesting information regarding the costs of commodities at this time, and, sometimes sad glimpses of the lives of the villagers. In 1767, for instance, a bag of coals costing 117- was given to one James Heath, while Paul Miller was given thatch for his house which cost 5/-. A funeral cost 10/-, while a gown and petticoat cost 6/2d. In 1770 Ann Spencer was provided with a pair of shoes at a cost of 3/-. In 1771 a funeral cost £1.6.6d. and, in the next year, a 'poor travelling woman and her son' were given 1/- to see them on their way. In those times bribery was frequently preferred by villages rather than the expense of having poor people 'on the parish'. 1773 strikes a more familiar note with Ann Spencer being provided with a further pair of shoes, again at 3/-, and with the expenses of Edward Roberts' wedding, including ale, amounting to 10/4. Not only was Edward Roberts provided with a wedding but the Overseers also gave him a grand send-off when they hired a horse and stood the expense of going with him to Chester for a cost of 5/6. In 1776 a load of coals was bought for 15/- and in 1777, Mary F. was provided with £1 for her lying in. The midwife was paid 5/- and the expenses of 'going to Mrs. Mainwaring with her' amounted to 6d. 'In 1782 a 'poor man with a wife and two children' was given 1/-. In 1701, the charges for attending the Coroners inquest on a man who had died amounted to 2/6d., while in 1727, inquest charges were 1/6d. They were still the same in 1744/ for attendance at an inquest in Churton on a child who had drowned in the Dee. In case it should be thought that largesse was being distributed without any checks on the use to which it was put, an entry for 4th November 1759 in the Poor Book states that 'it has been agreed that the Overseers would get an Order to remove Edward the Mugman and widow Richardson unless they bring proper certificates from their respective settlements betwixt this and next month's meeting'.

Although the days of the Civil War were long past, the eighteenth century still had its echoes of the deposed Stuarts in the risings of 1715 and 1745. There is no record of any Jacobite activity in Farndon itself but there were Jacobite sympathisers in the area and a group met regularly in Wrexham. The village had a certain amount of dealings with the military and, in 1727, the Constables Book contains a charge of 1/6d. for quartering soldiers on two occasions. There are also references to the village musket which was repaired in 1723 at a cost of 1/- and provided with powder and ball for a similar amount. In 1741 it was repaired again for 1/- and provided with a ramrod for 4d. This musket was presumably sufficient deterrent to any potential Jacobites since there is no record of any departures from the village to join either the Old or the Young Pretenders.

From a religious point of view, Farndon was almost solidly Anglican by the eighteenth century. The Diocesan Returns for 1717 and 1767 state that there were no Roman Catholics in the village, while the visitation of 1779 states that there were 100 houses and the only non-Anglicans were a few Methodists who, at the time in question, would probably still have been regarded as members of the Church of England. As far as is known John Wesley never visited Farndon. The Patron was Lord Grosvenor, the Register was stated to be kept properly and, although there was no parsonage, the church was said to be in good repair. The value of the living in 1722 was worth £33.

Little is known of the characters and personalities of the incumbents during this period and, although it is interesting to speculate that some may have been typical hunting parsons, there is no evidence of this except to add that men bearing the names *Mostyn* and *Mytton* were well known in hunting circles. The only reference to a Farndon clergyman (although not by name) comes from the Visitation of 1779 which states that The Minister of Farndon . . . set up a claim pretending to a right in certain lands of the Augmentation, though no authoritative decision was ever made, which matter deserves some enquiry'.



Churton Hall, Farndon

However, if little is known of the incumbents, considerable details regarding the Church's affairs are available from the Churchwarden's Accounts of 1744-1781 and the Church Book of 1781-1828. For example, although the congregation may not have been trained musicians themselves, they certainly knew what they liked as can be seen from an entry for 16th January 1785 which reads: 'At a legal Vestry Meeting held this day, it is agreed that the sum of £1.1.0d. shall be paid yearly by the Churchwarden to the Singers as long as they continue to sing such tunes as the inhabitants of this parish shall approve of. Mr. Vaughan, the present Churchwarden, is ordered to give them a guinea immediately'.

The Church had an income from lands at Isycoed between Holt and Bangor-on-Dee, to which there are several references in the Church Book. For instance, there is a reference to £3.5.0d. which was 'received from Charles Parsonage and paid to the poor of the Parish of Farndon for their lands in Esacoid (sic)'. On 17th September 1783 monies were received from Samual Sidebotham of £7.7.0d. for 'the Kings Rents of the lands in Esacoid belonging to the poor of the Parish of Farndon'. Later disputes would appear to have broken out between the Church and the tenants and a certain amount of unpleasantness ensued.

There were obviously other sources of income for the benefit of the poor. In 1754, £90 was banked with Mr. Richardson, goldsmith, in Chester, which was repayable at one month's notice. In fact, on 21st December 1755, Mr. Richardson was given notice to pay out the money the following February. Money was lent out on mortgage at a rate of £3.15.0% per annum with land as security.

The Churchwarden's Accounts contain the general accounts for the upkeep of the Church and include an Easter dinner each year for the members of the Vestry. Fortified by this, the Vestry was able to attend to its manifold duties which included repairs to the Church. In 1748, Church gates were erected at a cost of £1.11.0d. and, in 1752/3, a new clock was installed. This involved 3½ days work at 1/4d. per day and for helping to fix the clock, 4/8d. per day. In 1755 the porch floor was mended while, on 15th July 1767, the top of the steeple was repaired. In 1760, the bells were rung for 'the victory of Prince Ferdinand over the French', and, in 1761, the loyal villagers of Farndon were ringing their bells again for the Coronation of King George III. Amid such patriotic fervour, a payment for sparrow heads in 1779 strikes a definitely more bucolic note. In fact it was the practice in most parishes to make payments for vermin caught; especially for sparrows and hedgehogs. In Farndon during the whole of 1791 the wardens paid out for 1,476 sparrow heads.

Although little enough is known about the lives of most of the inhabitants of the village at this time, the biography of one who attained a high position in the Church is well documented.

Roger Barnston, the younger son of Roger Barnston of Churton, was born in 1709. After attending Sedbergh School he completed his education at Trinity College Cambridge where he received his B.A. degree in 1730/31. After he had been ordained he was given the living of St. Michaels, Chester, which he held from 1737 to 1782 as well as the living of Conover in Shropshire. He was made Prebendary in 1739. He married twice but died childless and was buried at Farndon in 1782.

The same gentleman was also mentioned in a letter from Boswell to Dr. Johnson written from Chester on 22nd October 1779. The susceptible Boswell had made the acquaintance of Miss Letitia Barnston and refers to the fact, in his letter, part of which reads "How long I shall stay here I cannot yet say. I told a very pleasing young lady, niece of one of the Prebendaries at whose house I saw her 'I have come to Chester, Madam, I cannot tell how, and far less can I tell how I am to get away from it, do not think me too juvenile'." The lady in question was the sister of Col. Roger Barnston.

Another member of the Barnston family evidently followed the prevailing fashion for visiting spas since a report in the Chester Courant for 29th June 1784 states that 'On Tuesday last, the remains of William Gregg Barnston Esq., were brought to this city from Bath and, the following day, were interred with due solemnity in the family vault at Farndon in this county'.

Before leaving the family reference may also be made to an announcement to the effect that 'On Monday 26th March 1750, there will be opened a Boarding School for Young Ladies at a large convenient house in Watergate Street (Chester) lately in the possession of Roger Barnston Esq.'.

A famous name from the past makes its reappearance again towards the end of the century with Thomas Speed who was Overseer of the Poor in 1785 and Churchwarden in 1786.

The well-known picture of the Bridge was painted by Richard Wilson in the middle of the eighteenth century. Wilson was born in Central Wales in 1714, studied in the first half of the century in Italy and, among his paintings of scenes in North Wales, is the picture of the Bridge viewed from the Farndon side and looking towards Holt church across the river. This is the first known view of any part of Farndon and, while typical of the landscapes of the period, it presents an aspect which is still recognisable today. His own life was far from being as tranquil as the picture he portrays. For many years he was in debt and once painted a picture in exchange for a Stilton cheese and a pot of porter. The latter drink has been variously described as the cause of or the consolation for his lack of funds, but obviously it failed to dull his wit as an exchange with Sir Joshua Reynolds proved. When, at a dinner in London, Reynolds, with a glance at Wilson, referred to Gainsborough as 'the best landscape painter in England', Wilson

replied 'Yes, and the best portrait painter too'. The artist died in 1782 and was buried at Mold.

The attraction of the area as a home for people from outside had obviously begun to make itself felt by this period as can be seen by a letter dated 26th May 1767. This was written by the historian, Rev. John Alien, the rector of Tarporley, to his friend the Cambridge antiquarian, the Rev. William Cole. In it he says regarding Farndon—"There has been a house kidnapped by a Manchester trader, would have suited you, upon the River Dee at a place called Farndon within sight of which I am writing; a Bridge and tower upon it divide it from Holt in Denbighshire. I wish you much in this neighbourhood but there is no engaging for any place till you have seen it'.

All local historians search diligently for large scale maps; the earlier the better. Most have to be content with the tithe maps drawn up in the middle of the nineteenth century but the researchers for this book have been fortunate. The Egerton Estate map is dated 1735 and this shows many details of the countryside as it was then. Roads, fields, and houses are all marked; indeed many of the fields are named and the ownership of each is shown. Of course the fields were not as they are today because farming methods were different, but the general lay-out of Farndon does not appear to have changed very much. The roads still follow the same lines and the church stands on the same hill. But in 1735 St. Chad was surrounded by green fields and the houses were few and far between. This is the only real difference and the 1934 pamphlet lists some of the old houses in Farndon at this time:

- 1733 T. Edwards (paid dues) for his house under the hill.
- 1734 Geo. Rowlands, for his house in Cruenooke.
- 1735 William Smila for his house in Churchyard.
- 1741 Wm. Bretherton's, Anciently Francis Clubb's of ye stairs.
- 1747 Rich. Eachris for his house by the High Pavement.
- 1766 Joseph Rogers for the Pinfold house.

Burdetts' map of 1777 seems to confirm this view. This shows 13 houses in the area although of course there must have been others too small to mark. Thomas Pennant too makes reference to the village, albeit not a very flattering one, during his travels in 1778. In this he says 'After riding along a dirty flat country, reached Farn or Farndon, a small town on the Dee called in Domesday Book, Ferenton'.

As the eighteenth century passed into the nineteenth, much of Europe was in turmoil following the French Revolution and was on the verge of the Napoleonic Wars. George III, for whose Coronation Farndon had rung its bells so joyfully, was approaching his final period of mental disturbance, and the marital misfortunes of the future George IV were providing polite society with a source of interest and scandal if not of edification. However,

like the wars against the French with which the century had begun, their effect on the life of the village was negligible. Farndon continued to doze in blissful ignorance.

THE VICTORIANS

1800-1900

The closing years of the eighteenth century, and the beginning of the nineteenth, were disastrous ones for farming communities. Britain was at war with France, and food prices had risen to famine heights. The controversial Corn Law had been passed in Parliament, resulting in great suffering among ordinary people. Farndon was not excluded from such hardships, and among the church records were discovered lists of persons who, in the years 1806, 1807 and 1808 received Sacrament Monies, in attempts to relieve their distress. These were, from Farndon—Joseph Rowlands, James Thomas, John Lewis, James Challinor, Samuel Davies and Mary Huxley. Churton cottagers who also received help from this charity were—John Thomas, George Powell, George Dod and John Gregory; together with James Edwards and Mary Price from Crewe.

The Sacrament Money was distributed on St. Stephens Day in the church, and this continued to be the custom for many years. In 1836 the Rector of Farndon, Francis Bryans, wrote to the inhabitants of Farndon Parish concerning this charity. In his letter he earnestly wished to promote their temporal as well as their eternal interests and 'thought it desirable to establish a Club in the parish with the hope of contributing to your comfort'. Members were to pay '2d. per week, which will be received in the Vestry, after the Evening Service'.

'The Sacrament Money, which has been hitherto distributed on St. Stephens Day, without doing much good to any of you, will in future be added to the contributions of the members, together with such subscriptions as I shall be able to procure, from which sources a fund will be raised enabling each Member to receive the sum of Ten Shillings and Sixpence to be laid out on Clothing, Blankets, Flannels, Coals, which shall be provided on the best terms on the day of distribution December 26th'.

The letter concluded with the statement that subscriptions for 2/6d. upwards, per annum, would be thankfully received.

In 1810, Lyson described Farndon as a village situated on a hill and overlooking the River Dee. 'The manor of Fame or Farndon', he said, 'belonged from a very remote period to the see of Lichfield

and Coventry and was held for many generations by the Grosvenor family. Earl Grosvenor was Lord of the Manor, patron of the curacy, and impropiator of the great tithes, which has in ancient times been appropriated to the dean and canons of St. John's Church in Chester. For many years the Bishops leased the manor to the members of the Barnston family, the largest landowners within the manor'. In the year 1816 it was 'held on lease' by Roger Barnston of Churton, Esquire, who held a Court Leet and Baron. This court was held once a year, on the second Wednesday in December at the Nags Head, Farndon. The court was not only concerned with the December rent audit of the Barnston Estate, but other village business was also settled. A jury was present, along with the steward of the manor, three constables, and two burleymen. The duties of the jury were to discuss such questions as the cleaning of the ditches and watercourses, and other minor obstructions and nuisances. All such complaints were called to the attention of the steward of the manor, who was then charged with laying such complaints before the owners, when the matters complained of were at once remedied.

The Farndon Constables met at the close of afternoon services in the church on the first Sunday in each month. In 1807 it was they who made the decision to widen the road in the Twitchhooks; the work took three days at a cost of 3/- a day. Again, in 1812, it is noted that the Twitchhooks required a new post—expenditure 2/6. 'Twitchhooks' were used for the horse ropes and hooks and were fastened to the post for hauling the carts up from the steep bank of the river.

By an Act passed in 1843 and 1844 certain property belonging to the Bishops of Lichfield, including the Manor, became vested in the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. By Deed of Conveyance dated 1st November 1888 Mrs. M. E. Barnston purchased the Freehold of the Manor and subsequently, on 19th November 1892, gave it to her only son Mr. Harry Barnston on his attaining his majority. He later became Sir Harry Barnston Bt. M.P. and Controller of H.M. Household.



Black & White Cottages, Farndon

Farndon Church, similar to all other village churches in the nineteenth century, was a hive of activity and the centre of village life. A lady correspondent wrote in 1835 'I was in Farndon for the whole summer from Easter to September. On Whit Sunday they had a very pretty custom of dressing the church and churchyard. The graves were covered with rushes and neatly arranged, and on the rushes flowers were strewn. From where I sat in the music gallery (the instruments were various) the appearance of the church was very striking. All the pews were dressed in asparagus stuck in holes in the pew backs. Flowers were fastened to the asparagus and the body of the church was a mass of waving blooms'.

In 1840 the church tower received a new peal of eight bells and full alterations were made to the interior. In 1855, a correspondent wrote 'The church yet contains enclosed pews fitted with tables, lounging seats and curtains (but), the rector has commenced alterations. The large pulpit has been removed from its place in front of the East Window and a lower open roof over the choir (1853-4), a gallery at the west end, and an organ (once a barrel organ) have been installed. The keys have been ingeniously introduced by the village blacksmith who plays. Within a glass case a bassoon, found beneath the floorboards. Merry days when our singing was led by Flageolet, cello tabor, lute and drum'. The first mention of a bassoon was in 1785 when one was bought for use in the church for the sum of £6 Os. 8d. In 1796 a violin was also used.

In the year 1846 Randolph Caldecott the artist was born in Chester. His father was born at Caldecott Hall near Crewe, so Farndon can proudly claim a certain connection with this fine illustrator. Caldecott is an old Cheshire name, and there has been a family of Caldecotts living at Caldecott Hall from the early years of the Norman conquest until about 1903-1904. Randolph Caldecott died tragically at the early age of 40. His greatest achievements began in the year 1878, when he was asked to illustrate a series of childrens books. Many of his earlier illustrations contain the church towers and old houses of the villages of Tilston and Malpas. The tower of St. Oswalds Parish church features in 'Fox jumps over the Parsons gate' and 'Ride a Cock horse to Banbury Cross'. When walking through the park at Eaton he was very impressed with the wrought iron gates of Eaton Hall and he reproduced the gates in an illustration for 'Old Christmas'. In 1882 he became a member of the Institute of Water Colour Artists, and regularly exhibited there and at the Grosvenor Gallery and the Royal Academy. He died in Florida on the 13th February 1888. Caldecott's work was greatly admired in America and in 1936 a Caldecott medal was established. Farndon still has present day connections with this famous gentleman, as a member of the Caldecott family still lives in the village.

On the 17th April 1822 William Henry Clarke was born in Farndon. He was to grow up to become the first Judge of the Recorders at the Court of Rangoon and previously he was District Judge of Ceylon. He died at sea on the 21st August 1867 on his way home to England hoping to recover his health. Hard work, a strong sense of duty, and the Indian climate had proved too much for him. His family records his memory in Farndon Church.

In 1851 the population of the parish of Farndon had grown to 1,013 from that of 718 in 1801. The Parish had 197 houses with 527 males and 486 females, and the rateable value was £618.3.9%. There were several good inns and well stocked shops in the village, also a brewery and malting establishment, and a steam cornmill, the property of Mr Robert Salmon.

It is worth noting that the population of King's Marsh declined from 91 in 1851 to 58 in 1861 due to migration.

In 1860 the Post Master was Mr. Charles Harrison and it is said that the post office was Mr. Booth's cottage next to School House. The lane that yet runs between School House and the cottage is part of an old coaching road that went to Chester via Starlings Wood. Letters arrived from Chester at 8.20 a.m. and were despatched at 4.20 p.m. There was a foot post from the office to Barton at 8.40 a.m. and returned at 4.00 p.m. Money orders were granted and paid from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Farndon was very independent and self sufficient.

The Chester Parish magazine for 1867 records the names of two organisations that were already flourishing in the village. In January the annual meeting in aid of the Gospel Propagation Society was held in the School Room with Major Barnston of Crewe Hill in the chair. In July of the same year the Ladies Club had 120 members and celebrated its 27th Anniversary.

In the middle of the century law and order were uppermost in the minds of several inhabitants of Farndon. They had formed an Association for the Prosecution of Felons of which there were 15 members—Rogert Barnston, Esq., John H. Leche, Esq., Rev. Th. Boydell, W. Brittain, Esq., Mr. Thomas Speed, Mr. W. Lawrence, Mr. Robert Parry, Mr. Edward Davies, Mr. Peter Lawrence, Mr. Thomas Jones, Mr. D. Garner, Mr. John Parker, Mrs. Brown, Mr. Powdrell and Mr. Geo Posnett. Rewards were offered to anybody who assisted with or gave information which led to the conviction of offenders against any members of the Association or their property. The sums of money paid were:—

	£	s.	d.
1. For Incendiarism	20	0	0
2. For stealing any horse, mare or gelding	10	0	0
3. For Burglaries and Highway Robbery	5	0	0
4. For stealing cattle, sheep or pigs	2	2	2
5. For stealing poultry	1	1	0

6. For robbing any garden, orchard, or fish pond	2	2	0
7. For stealing Corn, Peas, Beans, Grass, Potatoes, Hay, Turnips or any grain whatsoever; or stealing or damaging any Plough, Waggon, Cart, or other Implements of husbandry.	1	1	0
8. For breaking or stealing any Gate, Fence, Quicksets, Poles, Rails, Posts, Lead, Iron, Copper or Brass	1	1	0
9. For stealing or cutting down any timber, trees or underwood, or stealing coal, or committing any Felonious Act, Theft, or Damage not before specified.	1	1	0
10. For making Bye-roads over any Lands where no road lawfully is.	0	10	6
11. For Shooting or Poaching in any manner whatever on the Lords Day.	3	3	0
12. To any Turnpike—Gate-keeper by whose information any felon shall be apprehended and convicted.	1	1	0

In 1875 the Association had grown in membership to 32, and included the Rector and George Barbour of *Bolesworth Castle*. However the rewards had considerably decreased, e.g. for stealing horses, cattle, sheep or pigs only £1. 1. 0 was offered. It is obvious that shooting or poaching on the Lords Day was not considered to be so wicked a crime as it had been earlier and only 10/6d. was offered. There is no evidence that the Association continued after 1875, so perhaps the reader can conclude that either Farndon became more law abiding, or that the local constabulary were having greater success in apprehending villains without assistance.

A Fire Engine was acquired for Farndon in 1868. This was a horse-drawn vehicle with a pump operated manually on a long wooden bar at the rear and which was known to the village people as 'The Old Watering Pot'. When it was required for a fire it was harnessed to a pair of horses borrowed from a local farmer. Captain Edwin Edwards was Brigade Commander for a number of years.

After a long period of hard work this engine needed much repair and new wheels so, in 1896, it was proposed to ask Holt Council to accept part ownership with Farndon. To this they agreed and organised events to raise the necessary money after which it was again put on the road in good condition. It attended many fires, but the early morning call on 12th September 1912 to the home of the Leche family at *Carden Hall* was the most memorable occasion.

The Fire Station was the Lock-up (dated 1837) and adjoined property in High Street; now used as a Catholic Church and named 'Mount View'. With the arrival of motor driven Fire Engines at Wrexham and Chester 'The Old Watering Pot' and its Station were finally sold in 1896 after 28 years' service.

It is clear from the 1871 Census that there had been many innovations and improvements in Farndon. The village had acquired a News Room and a Reading Room and they were 'well supplied with literature'. Mr. Robert Roberts the National School Master was Secretary of the Reading Room. A Railway Station had opened at Broxton, five miles west of the village, and two carriers provided transport to Chester. (Isaac Hall—Farndon to Queens Hotel, Chester daily except Sundays. Joseph Capper—Farndon to the White Bear, Chester, Wednesday and Saturday). It was fortunate that there was regular transport to Chester as the Sub-Post Master, Mr. Andrew Macfarlane, was not allowed to sell money orders, and the nearest office was Chester. This no doubt caused great inconvenience to local inhabitants.

Reading through the Census for 1871 (and for 1881) familiar surnames frequently appear—Edge, Ince, Hughes, Broster, Baker, Clubbe, Edwards, and Parker are just a few. Large families were very common, and nearly all middle-class households could afford to employ at least one living-in servant. In the nineteenth century wages were very low, labour saving devices were almost unknown, and houses were not designed to make housework easier. Unmarried farm labourers and dairy maids often lived-in with the farmers and their families. Their days began at dawn and such servants were thus saved the long walk from the village. In 1871 the Census shows that the population totalled 598 persons, most of whom were engaged in agriculture. The largest farms appear to be those of George Parker (who also kept the butcher's shop) with 225 acres and Elizabeth Lightfoot with 200 acres. Fifty men were classed as agricultural labourers and the seven who lived-in were classed as farm servants. Domestic service was the main source of employment for women and young girls; of these 35 lived-in. In the village were 228 children aged 14 years and under. The 1881 Census notes the following:—

George Parker butcher and farmer, six children and three living-in servants.

William Ince, stone mason, eight children. His wife supplemented the family income with dressmaking.

Rev. Owen, three living-in servants.

Farndon Hall—46 people in residence, which included schoolmaster Mr. Henry Armstrong, wife and family, pupils, and both inside and outside servants.

In 1878 the Rev. L. E. Owen, B.A. Exeter College, Oxford, preached for the first time in Farndon Church on Friday evening 12th April, but he was not inducted until 17th April. Fortunately for the future inhabitants of Farndon the Rev. Owen faithfully kept a diary and he was also an enthusiastic local historian. From his notes much interesting information can be learnt of Farndon Church and the village in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There are several items of interest:—

25th January 1881—Dee frozen over and vicar skated to Chester and back.

June 1881—Two dissenting preachers in village, slight diminishing of congregation. The morality of the parishioners has not yet shown any decided improvement.

August 1881—A. Rowlands who had been in the choir for three years left because the vicar rebuked him. John Ince also departed.

5th March 1882—Organ played God Save the Queen, in gratitude for the escape of Queen.

9th August 1882—Mary Barnston eldest daughter of Mrs. Barnston of Crewe Hill, married E. L. Swetenham. Rev. Owen assisted by R. Puleston rector of Worthenbury conducted the service.

July 1884—Charles Powell buried aged 87. He walked to church from Barton twice on a Sunday.

28th October 1884—Potatoes selling at 2/- for 90 lbs.

Easter Monday 1887—Vestry meeting at noon, Thomas Jones churchwarden made a bitter attack on the vicar, to which the vicar did not reply.

15th April 1888—Mr T. Jones, Parish Warden, wrote to the vicar and asked for half of the offertories. The matter was discussed in the vestry of the church on Sunday evening 3rd June, by Vicar, both church wardens, but no decision was arrived at, neither being willing to give way. The vicar claimed 10 years custom of devoting Holy communion offertory to the poor and offered an appeal to the Bishop, which was declined.

30th July 1888—Barnston family vault open, concerned it contained water after late incessant rains. It was however perfectly dry, preservation and ventilation excellent. (Nineteen adults, three children).

28th August 1888—Wettest day for nine years. W. Youde who had been ill for eight months and under Vicars care attempted suicide by jumping into river and was rescued by Dr. Thelwell. He was sent to Knutsford Gaol and died there 12th September, brought to church late at night, lay in church and buried at 10.00 a.m. Thelwell was presented with £33.00 in acknowledgement of his bravery, also he was presented with a Royal Humane Society bronze medal at Chester.

1889—Easter Vestry unusually quiet, no remarks being made. Mr. Thomas Jones did not seek re-election.

1889—Vicar spoke to congregation about the desecration of grave stones in churchyard by young people and children.

On 21st June 1887 Farndon, in company with the vast British Empire, celebrated Queen Victoria's Jubilee. The weather was magnificent and in the morning the village turned out to watch a fire engine contest. At 2.00 p.m. a service was held in the church. A

special form of service was used (issued by the Crown), a large congregation was present and there was no sermon. Sports were held during the afternoon; greasy pole, pony and donkey races etc. Mrs. Barnston distributed prizes (money). After all this actually 200 children had tea at the school and were presented with Jubilee Medals. Four hundred and eighty-six adults sat down to a meat tea in a tent on the green. At 11.00 p.m. certain parishioners assembled in the church tower and sang 'God Save the Queen'; bonfires were lit on the hills. Ten years later the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated and an excellent account exists in the Malpas Deanery magazine.

Festivities commenced on Sunday, 20th June with four special services in the parish church, all were very well attended especially the evening one. During the afternoon service for children, flowers on the altar were beautifully arranged in masses of red, white and blue. The real celebrations began on Tuesday, 22nd June, the weather once more was excellent, a lovely summer day with a cool breeze. At 1.30p.m. all the children and their friends assembled at the school, each was presented with a Jubilee Medal and a flag by Mr. Gilbert Parry. The children then formed a procession and walked to the church, where a large congregation was already assembled. After the service the procession was then reformed, and the children marched around the village waving their flags and cheering lustily. Tea for the children was served outdoors, under a large oak tree in Mr. Salmon's meadow, and was most generously given to them by Mr. Gilbert Parry. Sports then continued until 5.00 p.m. when about 350 adults sat down to a knife and fork tea in a large tent, which was provided by public subscription. The afternoon appears to have been a great success, and everyone young and old joined in the many activities, foot races, obstacle and bicycle races. An event which attracted a lot of attention, was the climbing of the greasy pole for a leg of mutton. The winner was young Philip Speed who took nearly an hour to reach his prize. Later speeches were made under the shadow of the oak tree. The Rector proposed 'The Queen' and gave a short history of the marvellous improvements that had taken place since 1837. Votes of thanks were then made to all helpers and subscribers and three cheers were requested from the children by Mr. Charles Pennington, headmaster of Farndon School. Dancing then commenced to a string band, cornet and piano till 9.30 p.m. As in 1887, parishioners again ascended the church tower and sang "God Save the Queen".

The writer of this article in the magazine comments that 'There now only remains one thing for Farndon people to do and that is to erect some permanent memorial to Queen Victoria', he also writes that one of the main reasons for the great success of the jubilee celebrations was the Committee's unanimous decision that there should be no drink on the ground.

The Victorians loved an excuse for merry-making, and on 12th December 1891 Harry Barnston celebrated his coming of age. He was a student at Christ Church, Oxford. Tenants, friends and neighbours presented him at the school with an illuminated address, and silver plate costing £235. The real celebrations did not take place until the following year—Wednesday, 10th August, when the whole village joined in the festivities which were paid for by Mrs. Barnston.

Further improvements to Farndon were made in 1892 and 1893. Gas street lighting was installed in 1892 in the form of three gas lamps; one by the bridge, one by the chapel and the third opposite the chapel at Chester Road corner. In 1893 the old cobbled pavement in the main street from Chester Road corner to the bridge was taken up by the County Council and macadamised.

In the same year on 10th, 11th and 12th February, Farndon suffered much storm damage and great gales blew in from the west. A large hole was made in the north roof of the church, and Farndon school house was terribly knocked about.

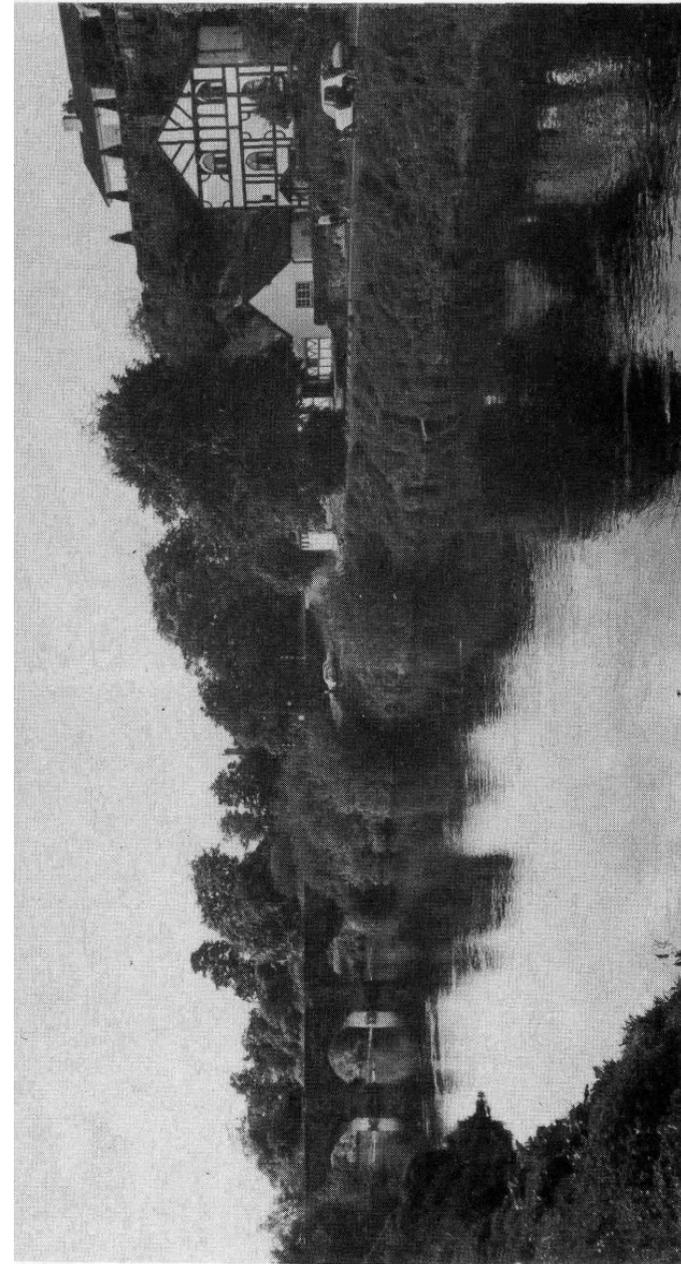
15th December 1894 was a momentous day for the adult male parishioners of Farndon when the first poll was held to elect a Parish Council. Seventeen candidates contested eight seats and the following were elected:

J. Salmon, W. Clubbe, A. Lowe, F. Bellis, J. Jackson, G. Parker (Senior) J. Jones and Thomas Parker. The Rev. Owen commented 'No labouring man was elected, the Rector was not a candidate'.

The winter of 1894-95 was also a very harsh one. In the week of 3rd-10th February the frost was several degrees below zero. The pipes were frozen in church and people skated from Chester to Farndon. There must have been much hardship among the villagers, as Job Harrisons charity was given in coal that year.

Stealing from Church alms boxes unfortunately is not a crime new to the twentieth century. Towards the end of Lent in 1895 the alms box was robbed of a small sum (perhaps 3/-) but the waifs and strays box was entirely emptied. On Easter Monday the former box was again robbed and the strong lock broken. The vicar put the matter in the hands of the police.

12th September 1895 was yet again a day for general festivities. Mr. Parry's eldest daughter was married (Mr. Parry was the churchwarden). Five hundred people attended the church service and the church wardens kept order. Two hundred and eighteen people were invited to the wedding breakfast, which was held in a tent not far from Mr. Parry's house. They danced until 10.00 p.m. and the garden was illuminated. One hundred and ninety-five children enjoyed a tea party and a Punch and Judy show. Miss Parry received a silver inkstand from the Ladies Club, a silver kettle from the parish, and a pair of pictures from the school children.



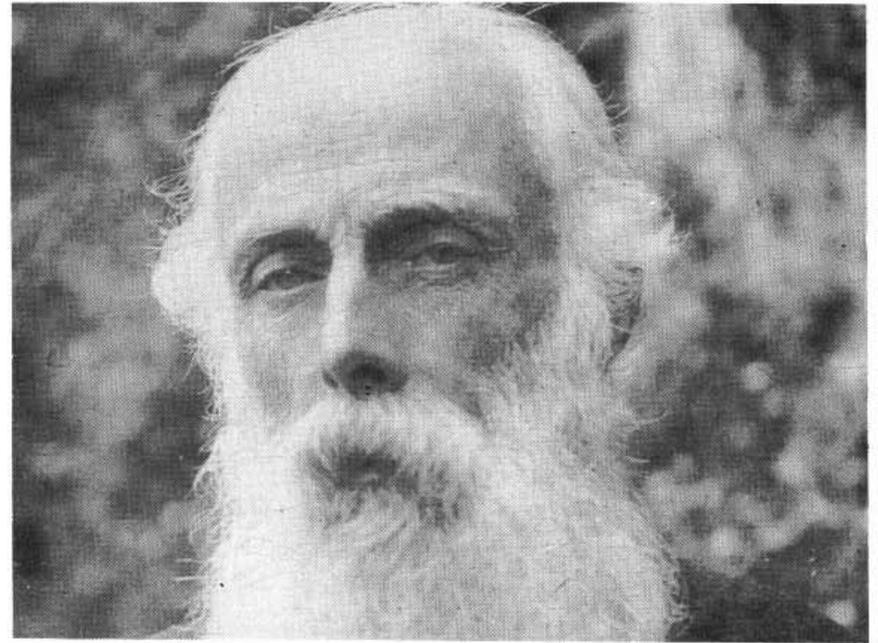
RIVERSIDE FARNDON, FROM THE HOLT SIDE, 1981



JOHN SPEED (1552-1629)



FIRST 'BUS IN FARNDON



REV. L. E. OWEN, B.A. (1843-1909)

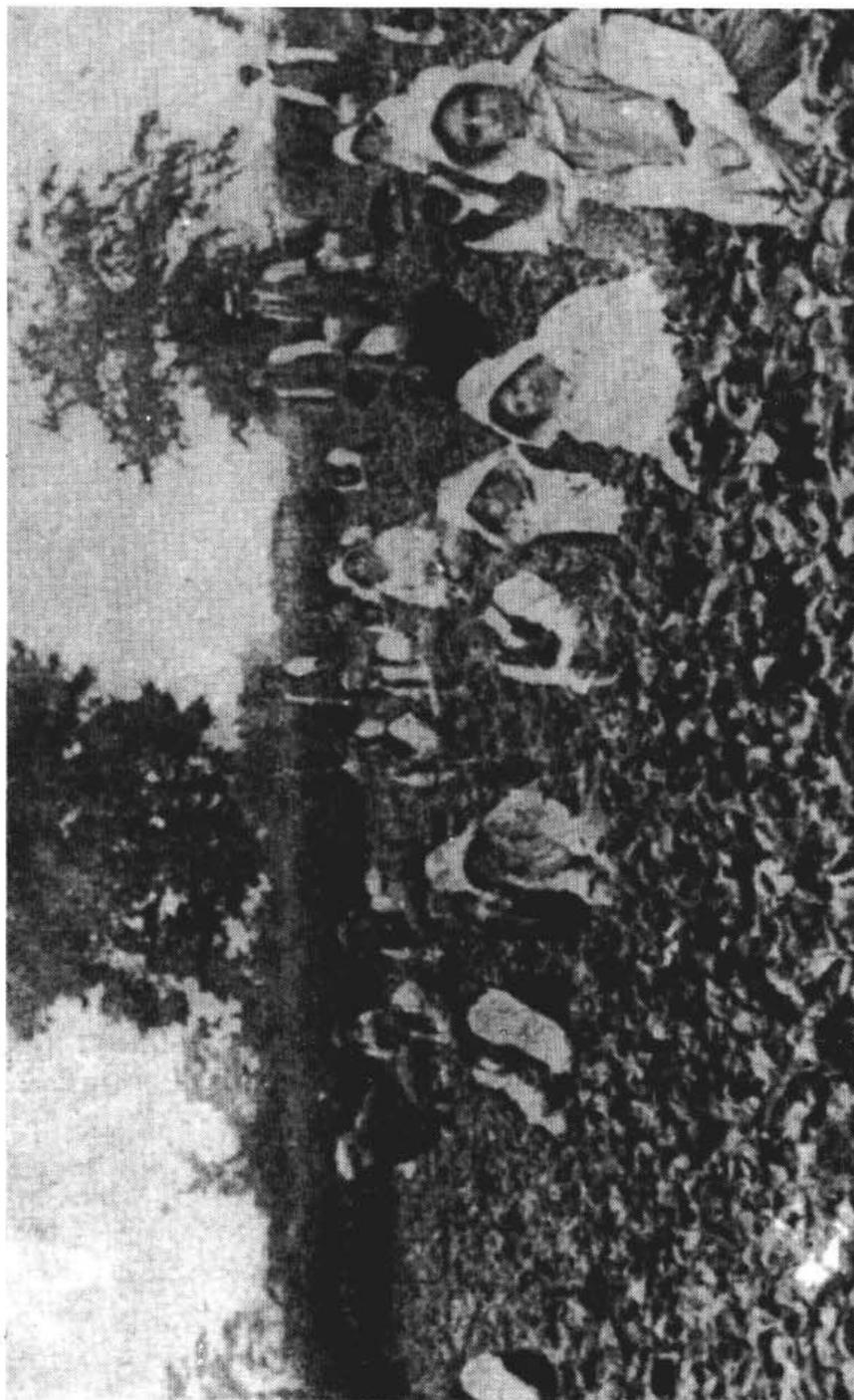


SIR HARRY BARNSTON, Bt. (1870-1929)



CHURTON F.C. 1910/11

Back (left to right): Harry Clubbe, Arthur Rowland, Laddie Salmon, J. Parker, Arthur Gauterin, Tom Salmon, Geo. Clubbe, Sam Vincent; Middle: Charles Gauterin, Dai Howard (Wrexham), Tom Parker, Tom Dutton, Jacky Thomas; Front: Charlie White, Tommy Rowland, Billy Parker.



STRAWBERRY PICKING, FARNDON, LATE 19th CENTURY



FARN DON HOME GUARD

Left to right: (back row) T. Piggott, F. Pridding, W. Lloyd, J. Batterby, A. Evans, P. Allen, T. Brown; (middle row) H. Blake, H. Jones, M. Cornwall, E. Chadwick, M. Roberts, C. Lewis, H. Hughes, G. Lewis, J. Pugh, E. Ennion; (front row) Sgt. F. Clubbe, Sgt. E. Chaloner, Sgt. Major E. Parry, Capt. Batterby, Sgt. J. Woolley, Cpl. A. Parry, Cpl. F. Penk.



TOP FARM, FARNDON



COCK O' BARTON



HIGH STREET, FARNDON, EARLY 20th CENTURY



FARNDON VILLAGE, EARLY 20th CENTURY

In 1896 the parish elected the following councillors: Salmon, Lowe, Jackson, Bellis, Clubbe, Jones, Keys and Sergison. In his notes the Rev. Owen makes the following cryptic comment. 'Thus for the first time for perhaps sixty or seventy years, no Parker holds any office in the Parish or County (Dei gratia)'.

In 1896 the Malpas Deanery launched their parish magazine. All parishes were invited to participate, and it was an immediate success. One hundred and forty people took the magazine in the parish and this commendable number was indicative of the improved standard of literacy. Parishioners learnt of the activities in other parishes, and they were also able to advertise for employment. From an extract dated 13th November 1896, it is noted that Mary Cheshire from Crewe, aged four months, was the first to be interred in the New Churchyard. The magazine carried questionable praise for the Parish Council as their expenses for the whole of 1897 only amounted to 14/-. They were praised for their thrift and complimented for not spending money on better wash houses and public libraries. The writer concludes 'We should think that there cannot be such another instance of economy in the district'.

In 1896, The Harvest Festival was held on 30th September and it was a double celebration of thanksgiving because gas lighting was used for the first time in the church and it was installed by Mr. Crowther of Holt at a cost of £37.10s.0d. The gas was supplied from the Gas Works at Holt which were owned by Mr. Crowther. Mr. William Harrison was the lamp lighter. Further gas lights were installed in the village, one by the town pump, and another at the division of the road beyond the house where, today, Miss Holmes lives on the Barton Road.

Although improvements were taking place in Farndon the villagers still clung to their traditional way of life, as illustrated by a comment in the parish magazine—'Farndon is about the last place to have regular evening meetings, but then we should remember that Farndon is a very conservative place and likes to keep old customs'. The writer was referring to the fact that the church still celebrated Evensong in the afternoon.

The supply of water to the homes and farms was still as it had been for most of the century and the water came mostly from wells 40 ft. to 90 ft. deep. Hand pumps were used to lift the water to the surface. Well water was very hard and most houses had some means of saving rain water for washing clothes etc.; most had old barrels for collecting the rain water from the roofs.

In 1896 winter evening classes were held on Fridays at the school. The subjects available were music, singing, ambulance, hygiene and shorthand. The classes received grants from the government and the County Council amounting to £38.10s.0d., but the expenses for the evening classes, which proved to be very popular, came to £55.13s.5d. At the end of 1897 the committee who ran the scheme had debts totalling £17.8s.6d., but classes were now held on

three evenings a week so many more people could benefit. The committee therefore decided to hold a fete in the summer of 1898 in an attempt to clear the debt and this took place on August Bank Holiday in the Rectory garden.

A Girls Friendly Society was started with an enrolment fee of 1/- per annum. The object of the society was to encourage 'purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, temperance and thrift'.

Temperance was a popular restraint in the nineteenth century and Farndon had its own Society which held regular meetings at the school. On 3rd August 1896 the Temperance Society appealed for more members and complained of a lack of interest. They commented on newspaper reports of drunkenness in the village and were supported by the Parish Magazine that 'we who live at Farndon know it is not a drunken place, and we indignantly deny it'.

Two sad pieces of news, one local and the other national, mark the close of the nineteenth century. On 1st December 1899, Alfred Carfield, gardener at King's Lee, and much respected member of the choir, aged about 26, disappeared from his home, and was not heard of again. His body was found in the river on 17th January 1900.

On 31st January 1900, Great Britain was at war with South Africa. Five men went from Farndon—Gilbert and Robert Parry, two sons of the churchwarden, R. A. Owen, son of the Rector, R. Thelwell, son of the Doctor, and Thomas Gerrard of Clutton. They sailed for South Africa from Liverpool on the L. Erie on 31st January 1900 and in April of the same year, Rowland Ince also left for the same destination.

MODERN TIMES

1900-1981

During the closing years of the nineteenth century it is significant that a great many of the villages of Cheshire either restored or rebuilt their churches. Around the turn of the present century most seemed to have clergymen of strong character who had considerable influence on the lives of their flocks and who, incidentally, frequently wrote up the histories of their parishes. The

lord of the manor who lived at 'the big house' was still the most important man in the village, but the incumbent usually ran a close second. The Church of England was then, perhaps, more powerful than it has ever been since. Certainly this was the case in Farndon and there are some still living in the village who will remember the Rev. Lewis Edward Owen.

Mr. Owen has been variously described as kindly and courageous, buoyant and persevering, eloquent and witty. In his young days he was devoted to athletics but later he became a keen local historian and was one of the earliest contributors to the Cheshire Sheaf for which he continued to write until 1902. He was born in 1843 and was the son of Canon Owen of Wonstan Rectory, Hants., and Tiverton in Devon. His first curacy was at Chilton Foliat, Berks, from 1867-71 before moving to East Woodhay, Hants., for the next seven years. He came to Farndon in 1878 where he lived for over 30 years, and was for a time tutor to the Westminsters at Eaton. He died at home on 28th August 1909 and was buried in the churchyard. He was aged 66 years, and was survived by his widow and three sons.

Although obviously a kind man and much respected, in the interests of accuracy it must be said that there was another side to Mr. Owen's character that is evident from his writings. In particular, he disliked the Non-conformists and would have been willing to prevent the building of the Congregational Church if this had been possible. The chapels at Crewe, Churton and Barton also came in for criticism. At times he even seemed to lose patience with his own congregation who he described as 'low church'. His notes are full of such comments as 'Not much real Christian feeling. People are very difficult to persuade to leave their ordinary routine'. He thought the wardens were excellent although they 'didn't fulfil their duties in putting people in the proper seats'. Sunday School, he thought a 'weary duty—plenty of children but few teachers'. The vestry, he said, was 'nothing better than an apology', and, regarding the offereries, he complained that 'the poor give well but NOT the farmers and the middle-classes'.

Comments on life in the early 1900s come from Mr. Owen's diary:

1901 July. The scenes on Sunday afternoon and evening are disgraceful owing to the hundreds of trippers and the strawberry pickers—the language, particularly of women, is fearful. All has its origin in the open Public Houses.

1905 A short Memorial Service was held in connection with the death of Robert A. Owen (his son) in Burmah on 5th August aged 26 years. He served through the Boer War—two medals and clasps—had been four years in Burmah. The church was crowded with sympathising friends.

1906 On Thursday, 11th January, Mrs. Simpson of Dee Bank aged 96 was buried in the same grave as her husband who died in

1866. She was a great benefactor of the poor and the church. On this occasion the new bier which was presented to the Rector by Mrs. Gill was used for the first time.

1906 17th July. The gas meter presented by Mr. Frank Bellis was put up by Lindsay of Wrexham.

1906 On Sunday night, 18th September, the church was relighted with the gas incandescent globe system; great effort has been made to assimilate the tint of the globes to the colour of the stove and with some success. It cost £7.

Of general interest will be the fact that a telephone service commenced at Farndon Post Office in October 1903. A few years later, on 28th October 1908, a Boys Brigade was started, and the first Bible Class of 27 boys aged between 12 and 17 years was held on the 18th October at the school. Their first Church Parade, under Lieuts. R. O. and W. Ince, took place in April 1909.

For the Boys Brigade, again, Mr. Owen was largely responsible, and in fact he was a great supporter of all youth activities and healthy exercises. He was one of the finest cricketers in the district and while at Oxford was a member of his college rowing eight and hunted a pack of beagles. He was also a keen swimmer and fly fisher. In the village he was a constant supporter of the Shepherd's Club and the band, and even started a rifle club.

In 1901 Fletcher Moss wrote his volume of *Pilgrimages in Cheshire* and in this year he visited Farndon on a bicycle.

Regarding the villages of Holt and Farndon he commented that there had been feuds between them for centuries. 'Even now', he wrote, 'I thought there was a Welsh accent in the speech of those across the border'. The church at Farndon he found 'open, beautiful and interesting', and proceeded to describe it in some detail.

Mounting his bicycle once again he journeyed on to Barton where he found the Cock to be 'the model of a good old-fashioned inn'. 'We ride into the yard', he wrote, 'and enter by the back door into a kitchen—a large timber-framed thatched building, open to the roof, with a fireplace built round with bricks in the middle of the room. It is a good untouched specimen of the rough buildings of two or three centuries ago. The tap room is also quaint, with a heavy oaken beam over the ingle nook, on which are the arms of Leche of Garden. The parlour is filled with first-rate, genuine, old oaken furniture, which is quite a treat to see. There are prints of the first Lord Combermere, Sir Watkin, and others, who were old men when I was a lad. A flight of rounded stone steps leads up to the front door of the Cock at Barton, which both inside and outside is one of the nicest and most picturesque inns any pilgrim could wish to find'.

In June of 1901 the young men who had sailed away to fight in the Boer War in 1900 returned safely, and a service of thanksgiving which was held in the church was attended by 450 people. Only

one, R. O. Ince, was wounded and, for a time, was a prisoner of war. Unfortunately, only a decade later, the war clouds were gathering again and when the call to arms came in 1914 it was answered once more by a large number from the parish. This time not so many returned and 18 lost their lives fighting for their country. Although not a native of the village, the poet, Wilfred Owen was killed during the last week of hostilities. It was said that he received inspiration for his poetry during holidays taken in the Broxton area. Amongst those who served but who survived was the lord of the manor, Capt. Harry Barnston. He rejoined his old regiment The Cheshire Yeomanry, became a major in 1915, and lived to be created a baronet in 1924. Only a few young men who were not fit or in reserved occupations, such as agriculture, did not go to fight although many farm workers and farmer's sons volunteered.

Rationing of food was introduced and sugar and tea especially were scarce. But as most cottagers were able to keep pigs and a few hens the effects of rationing were not so drastic as in the towns. In those days pig sties adjoined all the older houses.

During the war most transport was still horse-drawn and one soldier returning home on leave recalls that at Chester he threw his rucksack into the back of the horse bus and ran behind it to Farndon. On other occasions the passengers on the motor bus to Wrexham would have to get down near the present golf course and push the bus up the hill.

At the end of hostilities there was controversy in the village over the type of memorial to those who had died. Some subscribed to the erection of a Memorial hall while others supported the erection of a cross in the churchyard. All the men returning home were given gold medals by the people of the village.

Although most of the building in Farndon has taken place recently, in the early part of the century a number of wooden bungalows were erected alongside the river; mostly between the bridge and Churton. These were occupied in the summer by people from the larger towns and were built on piles in order that they should be above flood levels.

It has already been shown how gas came to be installed in the church in 1906. The school was lit in the same way and, although there were few street lamps, most of the large houses as far as King's Lee in Crewe were also piped for gas; not always of a good quality.

Between the two World Wars Farndon had a number of 'characters'. Maj. Fletcher recalls a 'frail old lady named Eliza Thomas who lived at the corner of High Street and Churton Road'. Her brother 'Johnnie' was a one-time gardener who lost an eye while hedge cutting. When asked his age his reply was invariably 'I be ninety-noine next birthday'. He would drink a small tumbler of port each working day at noon.

Others who may be remembered include Jack Bate who had a wooden leg with an iron ferrule which had to be renewed periodically by the blacksmith. Then there was Sam Shone, the farrier, whose unfailing remedy for a sick animal was half a bottle of whisky (which he usually drank himself), and Anne Thomas who strolled round the village in very old fashioned attire and thus gave it an atmosphere of Victorian elegance.

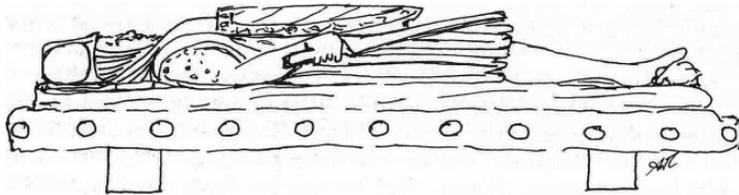
During the depression of the 1920s Farndon was less affected by unemployment than many villages. Few inhabitants worked outside the parish and most were involved in livestock rather than arable farming. Sir Harry Barnston still received certain rents due to him as lord of the manor although these were by now much reduced as previous lords had not always enforced their rights. The Court Leet was still held to remedy minor problems, the Jury always dined with the tenants, and several ancient customs of the manor were duly observed. The last Court was held on 10th December 1924.

Electricity came to Farndon in the late 1920s, and, by the early 1930s, piped water supplies were also available. Main drainage, however, did not come to the village until the 1950s before which time outside water closets were still the rule. These were frequently sited near to the pig sties for obvious reasons.

It was only between the wars that the animosity between Holt and Farndon started to subside when a few families crossed the river from Holt to live in Farndon. Before this there was very little social contact between the two, and indeed children who lived on one side and who crossed the bridge to the other would often be set upon or even stoned.

It was reputed that the first car in Farndon was owned and made by 'Old Tommy Powdrell' who lived next door to the Police Station on the Barton Road. The next was a pink Wolseley with a canvas top owned by Dr. Parker. Horse buses were run to Chester by the Gauterin family, but the first motor bus to Chester was a Ford lorry with a canvas cover and with seats on the sides and small rails to stop travellers falling off. This was aptly named 'The Caterpillar'.

Dr. William Parker, physician, councillor and churchwarden, was much loved by all and cared for the sick in the parish for over



Stone Monument in Farndon church to Sir Patrick de Barton

50 years. He would visit them on foot, on a bicycle, in a gig, and latterly by car. If nursing was required, however, the call would go out for Mary Ellen Jones of Church Lane, or Jane Partington of the Rock. The farmers themselves were helpful with gifts of milk, eggs and butter. They would even lay straw on the roadway to minimise the noise of passing carts and lorries. Two sisters of the Barnston family would call at any home with baby clothes when there was a new addition to the family.

Little housing development in Farndon took place until the latter part of the 1930s when 16 very attractive Council houses (known as The Croft) were built in Crewe Lane. There was also some private development about the same time on the Churton Road.

Farndon Women's Institute was formed by Mrs. Maples (wife of Capt. Maples of Rowley Hill) and held its first meeting in the Memorial Hall on the 1st Wednesday of February 1932. At an annual subscription of 2/- the meetings became very popular and attendance soon reached 100. For about three years Mrs. Maples was its President before handing over to Miss Edith Parker who guided its fortunes through the war years. During that period members did their share of fruit bottling and jam making, and had an egg-collecting scheme through which fresh eggs were given to Chester Royal Infirmary. They darned socks for soldiers stationed at Eaton Hall and helped to make camouflage nets in the old cinema yard. Although the present subscription is £2.75 the W.I. is still popular in the village and has monthly meetings with a variety of speakers and demonstrators. The branch looks forward to its 50th anniversary in 1982.

Immediately on the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 Farndon withstood its own 'invasion' of evacuees from the Aigburth district of Liverpool. Boys and girls, together with their teachers, arrived at Broxton station and were ferried to the Memorial Hall. The bewildered children, all plainly labelled with names and addresses and laden with parcels and gas-masks, were distributed among anxious foster parents. This was a complicated operation since care had to be taken not to separate brothers and sisters but finally the Hall was deserted and the settling-in period began. The boys left at Holly Bank with Dr. Alexander, for example, celebrated their arrival by scaling the ivy covering the front of the house.

Farndon school became overcrowded, and lessons were interrupted by Air Raid drills as the children practised wearing gas masks and assembling in their Air Raid Shelters whenever the 'alert' sounded; and this was fairly frequent. Happily the threatened bombing failed to materialise and most evacuees who went home for Christmas did not return. Liverpool, even in the black-out, held far greater attractions for them than did sleepy Farndon. However, a few were persuaded to stay, and in fact one very young girl billeted in Churton became so attracted by life on a

farm that when the war ended she refused to leave and stayed on to marry a local boy.

In 1940 the army huts behind the school, once used by strawberry pickers, were converted into a hostel for the Women's Land Army. Mrs. Forrest became matron and guardian over a score of young Cheshire maidens who worked on farms in the surrounding district. Of course not all found such work to their liking and many left to work in munitions or to join the A.T.S. but these were always quickly replaced by new recruits. Much ingenuity was exercised by land girls and their admirers in breaking the midnight curfew in force at the hostel. Twenty marriages resulted. One young lady working at Crewe Hall became completely immersed in her work. At the time she was engaged in harrowing manure from the shipp on along a plank to the top of a midden. At a critical moment she is reported to have left the straight and narrow path and to have plummeted into the pit.

The formation of Farndon's Local Defence Volunteers (later to become The Home Guard) also took place in 1940 with their H.Q. at Holly Bush. Capt. Haswell of Sibbersfield Lane was their first commandant and Lieut. W. Hughes was put in charge of stores as uniforms and equipment began to arrive. A photograph taken in 1943 shows Farndon Platoon, 'B' Company, 5th Cheshire Battalion, Home Guard. At that time Capt. Batterby was in charge and the platoon was about 30 strong.

Farndon also had its own branch of the Auxiliary Fire Service with Mr. F. Bellis in charge. Three crews were trained.

As in the First War the young men in the village were not slow to join the forces, while at home the inhabitants learnt to live with food and petrol rationing, and also with constant Air Raid Warnings. On 11th September 1939 the school opened as a 'Shifts' school with Farndon children attending morning lessons and Sefton Park Senior Boys attending those in the afternoon. On 19th October 93 gas masks were received from Woolworths and distributed, and in the same month excavation work began for three Air Raid Shelters in the playing field. Apart from several bombs in the Crewe Hill area, however, war damage was slight.

Although many of its inhabitants still work in and around the parish the growth of Farndon into a commuter village started with the ending of hostilities in 1945. The Council Estate was enlarged in 1947 when new houses were constructed at Crewe Lane, and Quarry Hill. While further developments took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the erection of flats, old people's bungalows, and many family houses.

The building of the private estates in the village commenced with 'Dawson City' in 1962; so named because the contractors were Dawson & Son of Chester. This attractive development of bungalows is tucked away down Townfield Lane and does not detract in any way from the village itself. Two further projects

followed. In 1968 Laing commenced building Barton Park and the Wimpey Estate came in 1975. These two later developments extended the village considerably quite changing its aspect when viewed from the Broxton approach. Other smaller infilling developments include Meadow Close, Rectory Close, and Church Court. The new Rectory was built in 1965.

This growth in the village is well demonstrated by an examination of the population figures of the Civil Parish of Farndon. In 1881 the figure stood at 556 and by 1931 the population was still only 560. Increases came in 1951, however, when the inhabitants numbered 688. This figure further increased to 818 by 1961, and the population stood at 1162 by 1971. Since that year even greater increases have taken place, but it can readily be seen that in the 20 years between 1951 and 1971 the population of Farndon was doubled.

A lady who might have had something to say about this population explosion was Jane Partington who was one of the first women to qualify as a certified midwife in 1904 when registration became law.

Jane was born in Caldecott in 1858 but lived at Rock Cottage in Farndon, where she had 10 children, from 1888 until her death at the age of 94 in 1952. Over the years she worked with Dr. Thelwell and Dr. Parker with her services being required not only in the parish but as far away as Nantwich, Stockport, and Liverpool. Frequently, an 'emergency' could involve a long walk at- all hours of the day or night to neighbouring villages. Not only was she very capable, but she was also very concerned when conditions were bad and, on occasions, she would lend a hand with the running of the homes. Remarkably, over all these years, it is said that 'only two or three were lost'. Her favourite saying was 'the apple will fall when it's ready'.

In many ways the increase in the population has of course been good for the village and has resulted in the growth of new organisations.

For example, the Farndon Amateur Dramatic and Musical Society began in a very small way in the early 1950s but was soon producing plays and musicals to packed houses in the Memorial Hall. For 15 years it ceased to operate but was revived in 1975 with the formation of the Churton Players who now present an annual production in the Churton Village Hall.

During the 1950s and the 1970s two committees organised Carnivals which were well supported. Although these have, for the present, ceased to take place, other clubs and organisations still continue. The W.I., the Mothers Union, the Ladies Fellowship, the Conservative Association, and 'After Eight' all flourish. The Farndon Ladies Club was started in November 1973, quite unaware that there had been a very active club of the same name in the past. This has been very successful and for the last six years

there has been a waiting list for membership. It meets on the last Wednesday of the month in the Nag's Head for a meal with a speaker. Its rules insist that it should be non-political, non-religious, and its speakers should not attempt to sell goods to its members.

The After Eight group was started in 1979, mainly for residents of the Wimpey Estate. It meets in the Memorial Hall on the second Wednesday of each month.

Perhaps the most successful of all the post-war projects has been the building of the Farndon Sports and Social Club. The idea was conceived in the somewhat modest hut which for years had served as a meeting place and changing room for local football teams.

Land was leased from a Committee Member of the Football Club, Mr. John Pridding, and on 1st March 1977 at a Public Meeting a Management Committee was formed. Various breweries were approached for financial assistance and eventually an offer from John Smiths Tadcaster Brewers was accepted. Building operations, with the help of voluntary labour, soon started and the present building was erected at a cost of about £60,000. The Club was officially opened by the Managing Director of the brewery, Mr. J. J. Whitworth, on 2nd February 1978. It caters for all tastes in social activities; the tennis courts will be ready for use by the time this book is published, and a bowling green will be available in 1982. Amongst those responsible for the enterprise are Dennis Kings (Chairman 1976-8), J. D. Jones (Chairman 1979-80), Peter Cosgrove (Chairman 1980-), Ron Weaver (1st steward and supervisor of building operations), Alan Hayes (Treasurer) and Burke Hill (Secretary). The present hard working committee are Alf. Parry, Rod Ennion, Jack Roberts, Gerald Griffiths, Keith Roberts, George Bell, Eddie Jones, Eddie Taylor and Ken Jenkins.

And so it can be seen that the ancient village of Farndon continues to prosper. Indeed, in 1963, it won the award for the 'Most Improved Village' in the Best-Kept Village competition, and Mrs. E. Huxley of Churton won recognition in the *Guinness Book of Records* of 1976 as the grower of the world's longest runner bean with the magnificent length of 39 inches.

This ends the first part of the story of Farndon which has traced the history of the parish through the ages. The pattern of life in a growing community is of course ever changing, but this has been an attempt to record something of the inhabitants and the events which have affected their lives—both the serious, such as the battles of the Civil War, and the less serious, such as the growing of Mrs. Huxley's record runner bean. It is hoped that the newcomers in particular will learn something of its past which will help them to care for its future. It is worth remembering the words of Lord Macaulay written in the middle of the last century.

Those who compare the age on which their lot has fallen with a golden age which exists only in their imagination may talk of degeneracy and decay: but no man who is correctly informed as to the past will be disposed to take a morose or desponding view of the present'.

PART II

CHURCH AND CHAPEL

'O God, who art a shield and defense of Thy people, be ever at hand we beseech Thee, to protect and help the builders of this Tower, that the work which through Thy mercy has now begun may by their labours be brought to a happy end.' I

(Prayer found affixed to the belfry wall during the restoration in 1927)

Farndon Church is dedicated to St. Chad, the first Bishop of Mercia, who lived in the seventh century. As pointed out in an earlier chapter, there were two priests in the parish at the time of Domesday thus indicating that it was a place of importance. It is generally accepted that there must, therefore, have also been a church at Farndon at that time, although no traces of what would probably have, been a wooden structure now remain.

The present building consists of a chancel, nave with side aisle, north porch, western tower, and the Barnston Chapel. According to Lyson, writing in 1810, 'a Chapel in the north aisle' belonged to 'the Massies of Coddington'. A Pew List of 1735 shows that no fewer than six pews were at that time for the use of Richard Massie Esq., and his family.

The building periods are very mixed with late cylindrical piers in the nave supporting arcades of five pointed arches. The pitch of the former fourteenth century roof is shown on the east side of the tower, the marks extend down the wall. The clerestory was added in the seventeenth century and also the windows. The roofs too are of this period although they have been much renewed. The Regency porch has an ancient studded oaken door which largely escaped the damage to the church during the Civil War. Being occupied by Parliament troops the building was 'much demolished', and an inscription at the west end records 'the church being ruined, was repaired and the bells new cast in 1658'. Only the tower now remains of the medieval building. The top section was

reconstructed in the seventeenth century. A stone on the tower stairs bears an inscription 'T.R.N.S. (TRINITAS) S.S. (SANCTUS)'. There is also a squint window. Hanshall, writing in the early part of the last century, says 'the architecture of the church is much varied although the pointed Gothic is most prevalent'.

After the Civil War it would seem that William Barnston, who built the Barnston Chapel, was largely responsible for the restoration in 1658. Many items, including the font and its cover, books, vessels and a poor man's box, were provided in 1666.

Other alterations were carried out between 1689 and 1726 by the leading families of Barnston, Leche, and Caldecott; including the demolition of the east wall which was re-erected 10 ft. further east. Repairs to the roof followed between 1793 and 1798.

The chancel was altered to its present shape by the Marquis of Westminster in 1853-4 and, in 1868, at a cost of £1,100, the church was restored, re-seated, and the pulpit was changed.

Farndon church has many links with the past. St. Helen's Chapel, formerly a shrine within the church (time of Henry VIII), reminds one of the local legends of this semi-mythical queen who is remembered in folklore as the daughter of 'Old King Cole'. It has been suggested that the tower once had a spire and it is interesting to note an Order by a Vestry meeting on 15th February 1767 'that the top of the steeple be immediately put into sufficient repairs'.

The Windows

There are 13 stained-glass windows in the church, the most famous of which is the Armorial window in the Barnston Chapel which dates from 1662. Its artist took his design for the armour from a military work by Thomas Cookson (1591-1636) and for the bottom border from prints by Abraham Bosse (1632). It commemorates the Royalist defenders of Chester, and was appointed by Squire William Barnston of Churton who commanded a company in the defence.

In the centre compartment Sir Francis Gamul stands before his tent, surrounded by the accoutrements of war. He was in constant attendance on King Charles I during the Siege of Chester. The badge of baronetcy is given in the arms and agrees with the tradition of his having been raised to that rank by his Sovereign. There are also figures of Thomas Berrington, the standard bearer, Richard Grosvenor Esq., Sir William Mainwaring (who was killed in the siege), and William Barnston. The window gives a comprehensive delineation of Civil War costume and equipment and appears in Ormerod's History of Cheshire. In 1808 the window was repaired by Dean Cholmondeley, but was removed about 1869 and disappeared. Eventually it was found at Crewe Hill and was returned to the Church by Sir Harry Barnston after the Rev. Owen

had taken it to London to be repaired. Owing to its great value Powell of the Temple declined the work but it was finally restored to the Barnston Chapel in 1894. Formerly there was good stained-glass of an heraldic character relating to the families of Leche of Carden and Bostock of Churton, but this has entirely disappeared. Many of the other windows are in memory of members of Farndon Church and are as follows:—

The large east window is in memory of William Plumpton and his wife, Anne, of Liverpool and Farndon.

A small window on the north side of the chancel in memory of Miss Joanne Barnston.

A window on the south side of the chancel in memory of Rev. George Vaughan B.D. Rector of Farndon.

A window on the north aisle to Mr. Gilbert Parry and his wife, Mary.

In addition to the Armorial window in the Barnston Chapel is one to Mr. William Barnston.

On the south side aisle are three windows to Selina Barnston, Charlotte Barnston and Sir Harry Barnston.

West end of the church and the north aisle to Rev. J. G. Lloyd, Vicar of Farndon.

South side to Mr. Job Hallmark and his wife, Esther. Two other windows are to the memory of the Parker family of Sibbersfield Hall.

Among several inscriptions is an eighteenth century marble memorial to John Puleston of Pickhill and his wife, Anne, which stands at the east end of the north aisle.

Effigies

There is a stone effigy of Sir Patrick de Barton with a dog and a gryphon at his feet. This knight is believed to have lived during the reign of Edward III (1342). The fashion of his armour fixes his period and his social position. In approx. 1850 this effigy was in the Belfry and used as a step which accounts for it being worn away. In 1879 it was put in its present position which is not the proper one. The last two pews should be removed and the knight turned into the centre with his feet towards the east.

A second effigy was inscribed 'Madocusdaur' and a third was inscribed with a wolf. In approx. 1650 all three effigies existed, of these only one remains, it is believed that the others were ground down for white sand.

The Western-most roof principal in the south aisle is supported by a bracket in the semblance of a quaint but hideous face. Tradition states that it represents Thomas Cromwell, Kings Vicar General 1535—an enemy of Holy Church.

At the end of one of the cills is a fragment of carving of an angel's wing. In a similar position in the ancient Church of St. John in Chester there is a representation of a like subject.

Furniture

There are a few entries in the Parish Registers for 1601 but the first manuscript is dated 1603. The following notes are taken from the Church Records:—

John Speed, who was born in the village, presented the Church with a Chalice when he left. This has since disappeared.

The large Silver Flagon was given by Francis Fletcher in 1781. The first Chalice was given by Mrs. Anne Fletcher in 1791. The second Chalice was received in exchange for a cup, the gift of John Speed.

Six men of the village volunteered for the Boer War and on their safe return presented a Brass Ewer which is inscribed with their names. This is still used today for all Baptisms.

In the Chancel is a seventeenth century Holy Table. It is plain with turned legs and bottom rails.

The middle shaft of the font is ancient. In 1643 during the Civil War the font was broken. It was repaired by Samuel Woolley of Churton and the first child at whose christening it was used was John Clubbein 1664'.

Bells and Ringers

In 1658 there were three bells in the church which were recast several times and were added to. Today there is a peal of eight bells ranging from a 4 cwt. treble to a 12 cwt. tenor. For ringing on special occasions payments were made as follows:—

1799	The defeat of Bonaparte	3.0
1805	Trafalgar	5.0

No amounts are shown but the bells were also rung in 1900 for the Relief of Ladysmith, and for the ending of the Boer War in 1902.

On 8th July 1894 '8 bell ringers resigned in consequence of the Rector placing a padlock on the west door, preventing departure from church after ringing'.

The Orchestra and Organ

In 1853-4 music was provided by an orchestra who performed from a gallery at the west end of the church. Later a barrel organ was used but this was replaced in 1877 by a manually (or choirboy) operated instrument.

The present organ was built in 1949 and installed by Jardine & Co. of Manchester having been paid for by parish donations. It was dedicated on 13th May of that year by the Bishop of Chester, and in the evening it was used for a recital given by Mr. Harold Dawber of the B.B.C.

Special Services

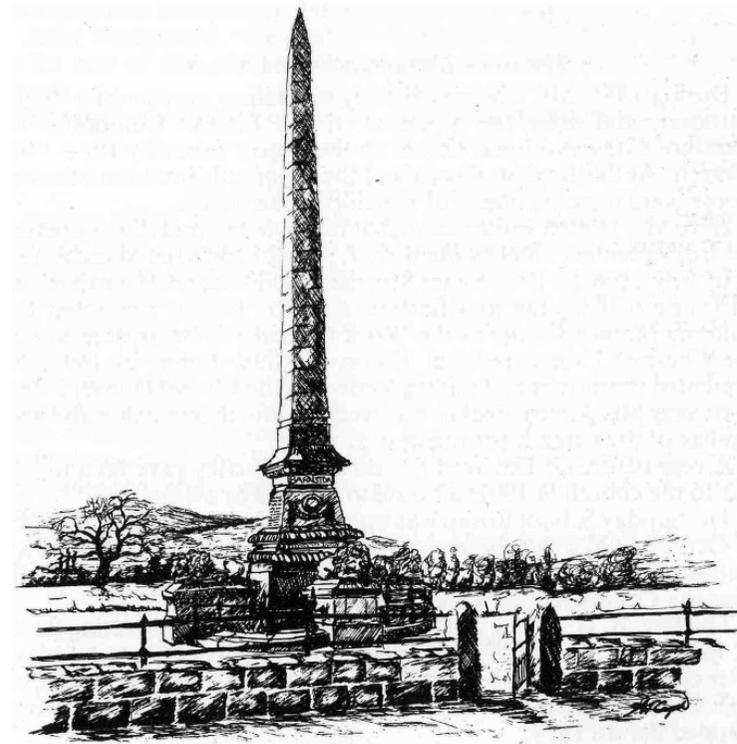
Farndon is one of the few places where Rushbearing is still celebrated. For this service, which is held on the Sunday nearest to 12th July, the graves are decorated, originally with rushes but now

with flowers. The Bishop of Chester attended the service in 1895 when the new churchyard was consecrated. Three years later, in 1898, the 1793 sundial on a turned post with a step was moved to the new burial ground, and trees were planted by Rev. Owen.

During the strawberry season services used to be held for the pickers but were not well attended. In 1883 an anthem was sung at Harvest Thanksgiving, the music for which had been composed by John Williams, the village organist. In 1894 Wrexham and Chester Cycling Clubs held a Cyclists Church Parade at Farndon.

The only major restoration work to be carried out since the Parish of Farndon was transferred from the Rural Deanery of Chester to that of Malpas in 1880 has been the work carried out on the tower in 1927. At this time gargoyles were discovered at each corner representing St. Matthew (winged man), St. Mark (winged lion), St. Luke (ox), and St. John (eagle); recalling the medieval child's prayer.

'Four corners to my bed, four angels round my head'. One gargoyle still remains.



Bamston Memorial, Farndon

Outside the church, however, there was work for the two village blacksmiths, Mr. A. Pridding and Mr. Ellis Eyton. During the early 1950s the weather vane (dated 1777) was destroyed by gales, and these two collected the pieces together and with them constructed a new vane which they presented to the Church. About the same time the east and west gates into the churchyard were in a state of collapse and again these gentlemen came to the rescue and presented new ones which were dedicated by Dr. Crick on 14th July 1951.

The new Bible was presented to the church in memory of Robert Harrison Parker who was born in Farndon in 1910 and died at Sandiway in 1969. It was given by his wife, Mary, and their son, Edmund.

The Book of Remembrance, in an oak case, is situated between the vestry and the Barnston Chapel. It was presented by her family in memory of Mary Nuttall who died on 16th September 1978.

A War Memorial consisting of a stone cross was erected in 1922 to the memory of 18 men killed in the First World War. Four more names were added at the end of the Second World War.

The Rock Congregational Church

During 1881, Mr. Thomas Huxley of Malpas purchased a site in Farndon, and drew the attention of the District Committee of Cheshire Congregational Union to the urgent necessity for a Free Church. At this time St. Chads and the Plymouth Brethren Meeting Room were the only places of worship in the village.

Here Mr. Huxley built a chapel at his own cost and it was opened on 3rd September 1889 by the Rev. J. A. McFadden of Manchester.

In July 1896 the Rev. Lewis Morgan Davies accepted a call to the pastorate of Farndon and Barton, and Mr. Huxley presented the building (known locally as the 'Rock Chapel') to the trusteeship of the Cheshire Congregational Union in 1898. Later, in 1899, he presented the adjoining building known as the Chapel House. In the same year Mr. Alfred Sinclair was received into membership and was a pillar of the Church for the next 57 years.

A year before he died aged 80 years, Mr. Huxley gave yet another gift to the church in 1902; a house to be used as a Manse.

The Sunday School Room was opened by the Mayoress of Chester in October 1903. At about the same time, the Rev. L. M. Davies instituted the Strawberry Pickers Mission. He became known all over the County as the 'Pickers Parson'.

The Rev. A. E. Bayley will be remembered for his flourishing Band of Hope and a successful young people's Society. Every Sunday, after evening service, meetings were held on Farndon Bridge. This, of course, was before the days of heavy traffic, and the meetings stopped before 1928.

Mrs. William Davies presented the Chapel with a Communion Tray and glasses in 1927 in memory of her late husband.

On 5th April 1957 the Chapel and The Sunday School premises were destroyed by fire, and services had to be held in the Chapel House whilst rebuilding took place.

Finally, on 18th October 1958 the new Rock Chapel was opened and dedicated.

The minister today is Pastor S. Boffey.

Crewe-by-Farndon Methodist Chapel

In 1858 trustees purchased land from Mr. John Morrey for the sum of £4.10.0 in order to build a chapel at Crewe. But although the building was erected in 1858 it was not registered as a place of worship until 1861.

As the numbers of the congregation increased an extension became necessary and, for a further £3.7.6d., more land was purchased from Mr. Morrey. It was not until 1942, however, that permission was granted for marriages to take place.

The little Chapel still stands simple yet solid in both structure and doctrine, and continually gathers a devout congregation.

John Wedgwood, 'the gentleman from the Potteries', is reputed to be one of the pioneer missionaries who preached within the circuit.

The present minister is Mr. M. S. Wilson of Broxton.

The Roman Catholic Mass Centre

Before 1964 Catholics in Farndon attended Mass in the Golden Lion at Holt and later at the Gredington Arms. The priest who conducted the services came from Wrexham.

The Farndon Chapel is now served by priests from the Retreat and Conference Centre, St. Josephs, Malpas. The regular priest is Father T. McShane.

An interesting feature in the Chapel is the collection of 14 pictures depicting the Stations of the Cross. These drawings, the work of an Italian prisoner of war, were found in a farm outhouse in the area after the Second World War. These pencil drawings were cleaned and framed and are a memorial to an unknown soldier.

There is now hope of a permanent Chapel being built adjoining Mount View.

Churton Methodist Chapel

On the wall above the door of the Chapel is inscribed:— 'Mine House shall be called a House of Prayer for all people

(Isaiah c. Ivi, v. 7).

It was built in the year 1832 by voluntary labour and is still in use. The present minister is the Rev. A. Daemond Hall.

STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM

The title of this chapter may perhaps be considered misleading since 'cream' was of course available in Farndon long before 'strawberries' were introduced in the nineteenth century. Indeed, even in Roman times, agriculture in some form must have been the main occupation of the villagers, and it seems likely that the area of medium loam around Farndon, Churton and Barton would have been used for arable cultivation. The lower stretches of heavier soils to be found at King's Marsh and Crewe-by-Farndon were originally hardwood forests but these also were gradually reclaimed for similar purposes. In these lower areas marl pits can still be distinguished. Marl was a mixture of clay and limestone and its use as a fertiliser can be traced back to the thirteenth century in King's Marsh. Indeed the Historical Atlas of Cheshire suggests considerable areas of arable cultivation in this region in both the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The first farm to be mentioned by name is *Church Farm* which, in 1396, was owned by Ralph de Bellewe. This, according to a document of 1900, stood 'facing the two large Lime trees, East of the Church'. It later belonged to the Powdrell family, but it was bought by the Duke of Westminster and pulled down in 1879. 'From its barns', states the same document, 'came the beams in the rector's study. The beams are dated 1649—the year of King Charles execution'.

It is likely that the dairy cow in Cheshire rural life was a product of the economic problems of the second half of the fourteenth century, and it is therefore probable that 'cream' in Farndon then became popular for the first time. When cheese making started on a commercial scale it is not possible to determine, and the tradition that the Romans exported it from this area has not so far been proved. Undoubtedly it was carried on during the Dark Ages but even in Medieval times it was mostly made from ewe's milk. A clear picture of the organisation of the dairy farm does not emerge until the time of the Tudors.



Chapel House, Farndon

In Cheshire the soil is reputed to give the cheese a unique flavour and in the Farndon district it has been made for some centuries. In the river are still the remains of the stone jetties from which the cheese was once loaded into boats for transportation to Chester. The cattle, as is the case today, would have been kept on the stiffer clay areas, and the fields round the village (the *Town Fields*) would have been used for growing oats, wheat, barley and (later) vegetables. The cattle that were housed in the village during the winter would have to be watered at the river twice a day. At the *Top Farm*, however, was an artificial pond in the yard which was fed with rainwater and from a marl hole in the adjoining field. In more recent times this also was used for watering cattle.

Some information regarding land and land owners can be found in the Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Historic Society (1952) which examines the Carden Hall Papers. A *Town Field* is mentioned several times: 1617 Thomas Yardley of Farndon, gentleman, sold John Leche of Garden, gentleman, 2 ½ lounds of land in Farndon Townfield; 1687. John Leche of Carden leased a messuage in Farndon and certain parcels of land in Farndon, Townfield; 1687-8. There was an exchange of lands in Farndon Townfield; 1613. In a rental of this year were enumerated 50 butts and one pike 'in Farndon Yeldermor, beginning to count at the hedge next Fame Lane'. The modern Yield Mere is a field on the eastern edge of the township. With these items were associated 19 'Lease gresses' and a 'Lease gresse every third year' which probably refers to meadow strips, for another rental, which, according to some of the persons named therein, 'may be 100 or more years older. 'Herbages in Farndon Hea according to the old rental' are mentioned in other documents. Farndon Hay today is one of many flat meadows next to the River Dee and drained by ditches.

The 1735 Estate Map shows that the tithe barn stood on the site of the old Brewery and the windmill presumably occupied a position on Windmill Flatts. This is highish ground and faces the prevailing wind. At that time the map shows that extensive areas between Farndon and Churton were still not enclosed. These were farmed in small strips varying in size from about a quarter to two acres; one person having various strips in several places. One small croft at the bottom of the cliff by the river and close to the Church is still called the Vineyard as it was in the eighteenth century. By 1841 all the strips had been enclosed; mostly by the large landowners.

In the nineteenth century most of the cottages in the parish had a sty in which the villagers kept one or two pigs to fatten for their own use. Quite a number also kept several cows which were driven to the small crofts on the edges of the village in summer. The three largest farms in Farndon were *Top Farm*, *Bottom Farm* and *Church Farm* but, in conjunction with the production of Ale, the Brewery was also a farming establishment. Around the old

outbuildings wild hops can still be found growing in the hedges. Behind Highway Farm, in the yard, can still be seen the stone foundations of a 'Jenny' or 'Jinny' ring which could once be found at many old farms. This consisted of a pole attached to a system of cogs and beams and was used for churning butter early in the present century. To this was harnessed a horse which was driven round in circles; usually by one of the children.

Domestic water supplies were obtained from pumps at the Well House (now Lime Cottage) on the Barton Road, near the Lock Up in the High Street, and from a spring down by the river. There were private pumps at Top Farm, the Rectory, Laurel Bank and at one or two other places. The water from the artesian wells was very hard so rainwater was preferred for washing clothes. Most of the sandstone in the village came from the main quarry down Meadow Lane and alongside the river, but there was also a smaller quarry at the bottom of the hill on the Barton Road. Down Crewe Lane were two brickyard fields and another large site at Rowley Hill.

In 1850, Bagshaw's Directory shows only six farmers in Farndon township. Their names were Daniel Garner, Joseph Garner, William Lawrence, Paul Miller, John Parker, and William Posnett. It was 10 years later, in 1860, that the famous strawberries were introduced to Holt by one of the Bellis family.

In the early years strawberries were sold first in Chester, then in Liverpool, and later in Manchester. Peak production was attained just before the First World War when Bellis Bros., alone had several hundred acres. During this period there were also a number of other smaller growers on both sides of the river. This quite considerable area was harvested by itinerant workers called 'Dodgers' because of their inclination to dodge regular employment. These workers were housed in huttid accommodation by the growers concerned and one such building could house up to 900 pickers. In Farndon itself over 300 acres was devoted to this fruit early in the century. Writing in 1911, a Mr. Charles Edwards commented:

'Strawberry growing is the chief industry on both sides of the Dee here. In July 1,000 pickers may be seen in the fields in Holt parish alone, and little boys earn fabulous wages as bird scarers. - Once a week, however, the interest moves to Farndon inns over the water. No Sunday Trading in Holt'.

Probably it was 'Farndon's inns' that caused the trouble, but whatever the reason, strawberry pickers were not popular in the area. Mrs. Pridding, who was interviewed recently and who remembers the period from 1918 to 1930 in particular, has this to say:

'The pickers were mainly roadsters travelling around the country and originating from cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. For them this was the first job of the season after which they would walk down to Kent for hop

picking and then on to Lincolnshire for the fruit and potato harvests. The winter was a bleak period when some resorted to picking pockets in the cities which usually led to prison sentences where at least they had shelter for a few weeks. Working hours were from 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Men received 6d. an hour and women 5d. per hour. They lived in huts near the strawberry fields and had water and milk provided. They cooked over braziers. Meals consisted mainly of cabbage and potatoes, boiled up in empty corned-beef tins (large 10 lb. type) which they fitted with handles constructed from wire. Bedding was straw'.

In the Rev. Owen's day, work started even earlier and he too had comments to make both on the crops and on the pickers.

In his diary for 1889 he notes that 'in the first week of July 140 tons of strawberries were sent off from Broxton station'. While in 1896 he says that 'this year, during the strawberry season, 80,500 baskets were despatched from Broxton station, not to mention those carried by G. W. Railway from Rossett'. In July of 1909 there were '1,000 strange pickers in Holt'.

Mr. Owen obviously had some sympathy for the harvesters however as can be seen from his parish magazine: 1896

'Ay now, but a could na sleep at all wi them tunes and firings and smashings going on arf the neet'.

'Such has been the remark of many who, after picking strawberries since 3 o'clock in the morning has tried to get rest, but prevented by the awful din of the shrieking organ, merry-go-rounds whenever there's a Club. During the past 2 or 3 years we in Farndon have been quite persecuted by these shows, vans, and hideous organs'.

In 1897, his diary reads: 'Sunday, 11th July, a very hot day, the Sergeant of Police stated that there were about 300 Welshmen come over to Farndon to drink. The disorderly crowd at the bottom of the village on Sunday nights is remarkable. There are over 300 strawberry pickers, all strangers, here for a month and no spiritual effort is made to reach them. I have tried everywhere to get a lay evangelist but without success. Holt does nothing either'.

Occasionally more serious offences were committed by the Dodgers. One, a man named Kennedy, together with an accomplice named Brown, were involved in a famous murder in Essex in 1927 when they shot P.C. Gutteridge who was questioning them regarding a stolen car. On the theory that a person's eyes retained the last image before death, they shot out his eyes after killing him. Eventually they were both captured, Brown in London and Kennedy in Liverpool, tried and hanged. Kennedy is still remembered by some in the village.

During the 1914-18 war most of the strawberry fields had to be ploughed up to grow grain and the stocks of plants were allowed to

run down. After the War new stocks were brought in and with them a virus disease which made the growing of the berries a very unprofitable proposition.

After the Second World War the strawberry pickers were mainly women from Wales—particularly from the area around Flint. Buses brought these workers in from Wrexham and for this reason they were known as 'bussers'.

In the first part of the century the different varieties of strawberries were Early Sovereign, Joseph Paxton and Bedford. Each was packed with different coloured papers in 12 peck baskets and then taken to Broxton station from where they were despatched to Manchester, Liverpool, Todmorden, Halifax, Huddersfield and Preston. By 1963 Mercer, in his Survey of Agriculture, states that the varieties included Royal Sovereign, Talisman, and the Cambridge seedlings Favourite, Vigour, Rival and Rearguard. At this date only 30 acres of strawberries were being grown in Farndon. Today the scale of production is now confined to very small areas in both villages. This is, in part, due to the cost of labour in the picking, and also to the introduction of strawberries to many other regions closer to the markets.

During the twentieth century the growing of fruit and vegetables has been of enormous importance to the parish of Farndon, but other types of agriculture must not be overlooked. In the Foot and Mouth epidemic of 1967/8, for example, the parish suffered along with the rest of the county and in Farndon the following losses were incurred:

R. J. Parker, Marsh House Farm	94 cattle	
T. J. Lewis, Kingslee Farm	72 cattle	
J. D. Broad, Castletown House	118 cattle	13 pigs
R. Evans, Beech Farm	67 cattle	
J. Hey worth, Caldecott Farm	59 cattle	53 pigs
T. C. Broad, Castletown Farm	61 cattle	
R. E. Studley, Rowley Hill Farm	114 cattle	

Spring cabbage for the Lancashire markets has been one of the main arable crops from this area for many years. Also there are still the damsons which were planted mainly in the late nineteenth century in the hedges around the crofts.

A fitting ending for these comments on farming is perhaps the description by the well-known Cheshire novelist—Beatrice Tunstall—written in 1947.

'Everywhere, there are damson trees, whose fruit, formerly, was sent to Scotland for dyes. And all around stretch the wonderful fields on whose fruit, today, this historic place rests its fame—strawberries'.

COMMERCE

Originally most parishioners would, in some way, have been involved in farming. As the necessity arose such craftsmen as blacksmiths and millers would have started to trade and, as the population increased, they would have been joined in business by a variety of shops to serve their needs. And so the village grew and eventually became established as the village is today.

The nearest watermill to Farndon seems to have been at Coddington, but the village did once contain a windmill on the Churton Road, and the field names on the eighteenth century estate map are evidence of this. When it ceased to operate is unknown and the early directories make no mention of a Miller.

The directory of 1850, however, does name those who were in business at that time in the township and these are as follows:—

James Broster, grocer and draper
 Wm. Fleet, beerhouse and mason
 H. Hughes, chemist and tea dealer
 Wm. Lewis, joiner
 Thos. Percival, saddler
 Thos. Woollam, bricklayer

In addition there were two blacksmiths (Jos. Thomas and Sam. Woolley), two butchers (John Parker and Abraham Thomas), two farriers (Dan. Garner and Thos. Seaman), three shoe makers (Sam. Edwards, James Marsh and Ed. Pinington), two shopkeepers and bakers (Chas. Harrison and Job Harrison), three tailors (Wm. Ince, John Thomas, and Richard Thomas), and two wheelwrights (Wm. Davenport and James Edwards).

The census of 1871 gives much more detailed information and shows that there were then 233 persons in work. Of these 79 were engaged in agriculture and 44 were in domestic service. Among the trades in 1871 were dressmakers (9), joiners (9), bricklayers (8), brickmakers (2), masons (5), teachers (8), charwomen (6), shopkeepers (7), shoemakers (5), blacksmiths (3) as well as a number of painters, coalhaulers, commission agents, clerks, gardeners and tailors. There were two doctors in Farndon and one each of architects, dyers, carriers, sawyers, slaters, horse breakers, grooms, and constables. In addition to these a miller does appear in the census, a young man of 33 years named Robert Hughes. Although he lived in Farndon with his wife and two sons the records give no suggestion that he ever lived in a mill in the parish.

Farndon is still of course very much a rural area and consequently there are few industries in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless notes on some of these should be included.

For the past six years the Miln Marsters Group-Ltd. of King's Lynn and Chester have had a plant breeding station here on the Churton Road as well as one at Docking in Norfolk. This station produces and tests new varieties of barley, wheat and oats, and also

tests herbage grasses. Several varieties of barley have been produced at Farndon including Golden Promise, Goldmarker, and Magnum. Golden Promise is grown extensively in Scotland and provides the majority of barley for Scottish malt. Production of any variety takes up to 15 years but the company are attempting to speed up the process by using glasshouses and sodium lights. The land is still owned by the Barnston Estate and the company at present employs 12 people on a full time basis.

The old *Brewery* is now a garage—G. and D. Taylor (Aldford) Ltd.—and has been run by the Taylor family since 1956. They employ seven local people, and the present directors are Charles Gauterin, and George and Derek Taylor.

Barton Road Garage belongs to Alfred Hughes, also of the Academy Garage, Holt,

Mr. J. Willett, a Cheshire man, bought *Cobbs Cottage* in August 1980. He intends to establish a nursery market garden on the adjoining three acres where he has already erected a large heated greenhouse. Soon he hopes to have a farm shop from which he will sell plants, vegetables, and items for flower arranging. The opening of the nursery was in March 1981.

Top Farm and *Laurel Bank* are both attractive early eighteenth century buildings, listed as of architectural interest, and marked as Priority One status in a Conservation Review Study just published by Cheshire County Council.

Top Farm is of particular architectural interest because of its Flemish gables. It is still owned by the Barnston Estate, and was tenanted by the Lowe family from 1880-1930, after which the Bellis family held it until the 1970s. In 1980 it was divided; one part being converted to a restaurant, and the other to a Craft Centre.

The Craft Centre is tenanted by Ian and Valerie Clarke, who sell a wide range of crafts, mainly hand made, and craft supplies. They have recently received planning permission to develop the outbuildings to the rear of *Top Farm*. This will enable them to make three downstairs craft workshops, with an exhibition and display area above for visiting craftsmen to give demonstrations. The Restaurant part of *Top Farm* is run by Ken and Liz Lamont and is called The Bailiwick—an old English word meaning 'justification or office of a bailiff.

Laurel Bank was also in the ownership of the Barnston Estate until 1976. From 1891-1907 it was tenanted by Frank Bellis, who was a butcher and used one of the barns as a slaughter house. A barge used to come up the river to collect the hides and sheepskins. From 1907-1942 the Haswell family lived there and another Frank Bellis from 1942-66. Dennis King was tenant from 1966-74, and in 1976 it was bought by Tony and Liz Caplin. They converted the barns adjacent to the house into workshops for a flourishing cabinet making business where they employ five local lads. These are all trained on the premises to make aged copies of old oak

furniture, which is mainly exported to Europe. A small number of items are sold to furniture retailers in this country, or to individuals who wish to have pieces of furniture hand-made to their own specifications. The firm also has a show stand at the Antique Hypermarket, Bridge Street, Chester.

The shops in the village are numerous and, because a list of all of them would be impossible due to a lack of space, the following are only a selection.

At the end of High Street nearest to the bridge stands *The Old Bakery*. As its name implies, formerly it sold groceries, confectionery, and bread, the last of which was baked by the present owner, Mr. Dick Stones who now sells antiques and curios.

During the 1890s the shop next to Laurel Bank Antiques was run as a partnership by Mr. Meredith of Malpas and Mr. Forshaw of Southport. About 1912, with the death of Mr. Meredith, the partnership ended and Mr. Forshaw took over the corner shop (now the chemists) which in turn was taken over by Mr. Alfred Sinclair for the sale of good strong clothing and footwear for agricultural workers.

Maddocks, the motor engineers of Tattenhall, had a shop in the High Street until after the First World War. It then passed to a Farndon man, Mr. George Thomas, who sold hardware, undertook cycle repairs, and ran a taxi business.

The Post Office has been at the chemists shop (W. W. Booth F.P.S.) since 1969. The first in the village, however, was that at *Mount Villa*, the home of the Ince family. They were sub post masters for about 100 years having started in 1880. It was then moved to what is now the greengrocers shop (J. & P. King) and managed by Mr. and Mrs. Roland Ince until 1947. Once again it was moved (to what is now the National Westminster Bank) until 1969.

The shop next to the Bank was taken by L. & J. Ames for the sale of fruit and vegetables. Previously it was a shoe shop owned by Mr. Harry Walker. In January 1981 it was purchased by D. R. and O. M. Y. Dawson and run as Dawson Hardware and D.I.Y.

The present greengrocers and off-licence is today owned by J. & P. King. It carried on this type of business after it ceased to be a post office. It was formerly run by Mr. Leslie Jones and his family, and later by Mr. B. Capper and his sister. About 1900 it was used for boot and shoe repairs by Mr. Nathaniel Keyes.

Grahams Machine and Tool Shop is presently owned by Mr. T. Graham and his family. Until 1977, when it was destroyed by fire, it was Graham's V.G. Stores. Earlier it was used by the corn merchant and baker, Mr. W. Pinnington. Originally it was a black and white thatched property which also burnt down in the early 1920s. Nearby, soon after the First World War, Pinningtons erected an ex-army hut for storage purposes, but this was replaced by the present red brick building in 1936. This was used for milling.

The butchers shop in Barton Road, now owned by Miss D. Holmes, was formerly an inn, known as *The Masons Arms* which finished in 1936.

The High Street Stores is popular today for groceries and has been for over 100 years. The dates of previous occupiers are known and are as follows:—

1830-38	Job Harrison
1840	William Price and Mary Harrison
1890	Eleanor Roberts, Thomas Jones and John H. Jones
1922	Anne Harrison and Netta May Harrison
1933	John Charles Madeley
1947	Joe Jones
1950	Maurice and Marjorie Jones (the present occupiers) who bake their own bread

In the village today Mr. Tom Wood is the plumber and Mr. T. A. Roscoe and Mr. M. Norman are heating engineers.

For fruit and flowers J. F. and O. Pridding have a shop in Blacon, and also sell vegetables, fruit and flowers at their market garden. The National Westminster Bank was formerly a shop where Mr. James Walker sold tobacco, sweets and newspapers.

The house known as *No. 1 Church Street* is now residential but in the early 1920s it was a saddler's shop owned by Mr. Alfred Payne. The lack of demand which came with the advent of the motor car caused it to be closed. A groom's cottage opposite the school gate was kept by Miss Payne as a tuck shop.

The Cash Store in High Street is now owned by Mr. K. Gelling. It was converted into a grocers shop during the 1890s by Cawley & Son of Nantwich. An employee of this company ran the shop from about 1898 until 1969 when it passed to the present owner.

The butchers and grocery shop, now owned by F. C. and D. A. Griffiths in the High Street, was extended in 1976. At the same time a small shop was added which was rented out to the newsagent, Mr. J. D. Jones, in February 1977. Previous owners of the butchers shop were George Jones (1920-25) and, afterwards, Mr. W. Griffiths.

Other traders in the area are William Hughes & Sons, and Thomas Lewis & Sons Ltd. (Builders); D. M. White of Church Lane (Electric Suppliers); and Allan F. Hayes (Dairy Produce).

Until September 1980 The Noble Smoked Products operated from Dee Bank Cottage in River Lane. This was owned by the Noble family, and sold smoked salmon, trout and mackerel.

Although not strictly a commercial enterprise, mention should be made here of Mr. Rupert Capper who is a freelance translator and interpreter. Mr Capper speaks seven languages fluently. He has appeared on television and was runner-up in the final of Mastermind and Brain of Britain in the 1970s.

EDUCATION

Before the Reformation there were at least four grammar schools in Cheshire; the earliest of these was one at Chester which was established by 1368. Evidence of elementary schools in the village is more difficult to obtain although it is known that the demand for education at all levels was increasing during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

However, education in Farndon by the end of the seventeenth century was by no means lacking and the village is mentioned as having one of only eight parish schools in Cheshire that were founded before 1640. The first schoolmaster in Farndon is named as Andrew Brednam, a Cambridge graduate from Norfolk, in 1578.

The Charity Commissioners record that the Parish School of Farndon and Clutton was built about 1629 by subscription. It was founded (probably by a Mr. Holland) from endowments in the parish but was not a free school and fees were charged. The master was nominated by the families of Barnston, Leche and Massey. He was provided with living accommodation (unlike many schoolmasters) and part of his salary came from the rent from the croft nearby which amounted to £14.

By 1711 the schoolmaster's salary at Farndon was higher than most and totalled £30 per annum. It is interesting to note that certain families at that period provided successions of masters and that of Palin occurs at Farndon between 1701 and 1709, and at Holt from 1760-1770; A Dutton was at Burton in 1725 and at Farndon from 1725-1728. There are no records of private schools during this period but, apart from those mentioned, it is known that Samuel Radley was master of the parish school in 1716. This is believed to have had some connection with the SPCK.

In the eighteenth century school holidays were usually kept at the times of the great church festivals such as Christmas (14 days), Easter (9 days), and Whitsuntide (7 days). Farndon was an exception however and here a month's holiday was given at harvest-time with either a week or a fortnight at Christmas. Obviously, therefore, the village was more involved in agriculture than most and, perhaps for this reason, no Farndon entries are noted in the list of Cheshire boys at Oxford and Cambridge between 1698 and 1756. Maybe it is unkind to quote the old saying 'Cheshire born, Cheshire bred, strong in the arm and thick in the head'(?)

The Private Schools

The nineteenth century was a period when private schools flourished in the village. The census reports can be used to trace their appearances and closures, though in some years the information given is more comprehensive than in others.

In 1850 there were two academies in Farndon. One was run by James Mullock and the other by George Rushby. The latter was still in existence in 1860 together with one founded at *Farndon Hall* by Henry Armstrong.

Farndon Hall was a Classical and Mathematical boarding establishment for young gentlemen. By 1864, this, together with a boarding school for young ladies at *Farndon House* run by Miss Ann Nicholas, and a further boarding school administered at *Farn Hill* by Richard Sergison, were all attracting pupils. In 1874, however, Farn Hill was no longer an educational establishment and was recorded as the home of an auctioneer.

In 1870 the *Farndon Hall* Classical and Commercial Academy (as it was known) was still in the control of Henry Armstrong. This had 36 boarders, mainly from the Liverpool and Manchester areas, and James Blake who was born at Barton, appears to have been the only local boy. Henry Armstrong died in 1880 and was thus described by the Rev. Owen.

'He was a well-known figure who kept a very large middle-class school which he only recently gave up. He was a striking looking man—tall and thin. He always wore a swallow-tail coat and was the best penman I ever saw'.

In 1870 the *Holly Bank* School for Young Ladies had eight boarders—girls between the ages of eight and 14 years. Two were local children; Mary Holland, born in Farndon; and Mary Brown, born in Churton. The school was run by Mrs. Caroline Burman who was assisted by her four daughters, one of whom specialised in music. At this time the master at the Parish School was Robert Roberts who was also choirmaster and secretary of the Reading Room.

The 1891 census names just two schools—that at *Holly Bank* and another run by George Brown. In May 1897, however, the Rev. Owen recorded that a Rev. Arthur Sloman, M.A. (Oxon), previously a headmaster in Birkenhead, opened a school for gentlemen's sons at *Kings Lee*. There is also a cottage behind the old cinema the address of which is *The Old Schoolhouse*. Presumably this too must have been used as a school at some time.



The Greyhound, Farndon

Many though the private schools were in Farndon, none could boast a master who would rise to national fame as could *Holt Academy* over the river. There, in 1887, after graduating at London University, the novelist H. G. Wells became a junior master. Unfortunately, he seemed to have a poor opinion of the surrounding countryside which he later described as 'grey flat desolate land'. He remained teaching at the school until 1890 when he was forced to retire after sustaining a kidney injury during a game of football.

The National School

The earliest days of the Farndon School and of the schoolmasters with their £30 per annum have already been discussed. Perhaps by 1850, however, they were earning a little more. For in this year the records show that salaries and other contingent expenses were being met by subscriptions and by a small charge from each of the children attending; about 60 in all. By 1860 the school was being taught on the National Plan, with Mr. John Davies as master, while the 1891 census mentions two other National Schools one at Churton run by Mary Shibbs, and the second at Clutton in the charge of Miss Meacock.

The original sandstone school building was extended in 1854 and the top classroom was added in 1900-1. It was further enlarged in 1903 when it was capable of accommodating 160 children although the average attendance was only 115. An entry in the Rev. Owen's diary notes that a sum of £222 was paid against the contract to Vickers of Tilston for building the New Infant School in November 1899. The Church Room and the kitchen were added in 1937 and are of brick construction.

Some indications of school life a hundred years ago come from the Log Book, The Parish Magazine, and the Rev. Owen's diary. 7577 H.M. Inspectors Report expressed disappointment with the examination results and found discipline low in the 1st and 2nd Standards. The higher standards passed more satisfactorily although Geography and Grammar were weak. 1899 The Reports found much improvement in spite of crowded conditions. The infants were said to be extremely good, as were all but Standard III who 'might have done better'. In this year 130 pupils were present and the tone of the school was considered good. The Report also anticipated further extensions.

18 79 During April a letter was received by the Vicar from the Education Dept concerning the appointment of a young female assistant. This pointed out the 'obvious dangers' that might occur, and suggested an older woman should be in constant attendance during school hours.

1882 The headmaster noted that on 1st February he punished several boys for playing truant.

1898 In September the marriage of the daughter of Mr. Gilbert Parry of Farndon Hall was celebrated. A tea for 195 children was followed by a Punch and Judy show. 1896 The Parish Magazine advertised the need for a new mistress for an Infant School of 15 pupils and a salary of £50 per annum was offered. It also mentioned that the older children, aged 11 to 13 years, should attend school more regularly. 1898 In August a fete was organised in the grounds of Mrs. Maylor's house, Churton Lodge, to raise funds for additional buildings for Farndon School.

1900 According to the Log Book the 'second and third weeks in February were very stormy and cold'. On the 10th of the month 25° of frost were registered and snow fell heavily. As a result attendance was reduced to 77 children, including the infants, on the morning of the 14th.

In December of that year 171 children were examined in Religious Knowledge by the Rev. R. Fairclough.

The diary of the Rev. Owen expressed some concern over the New Education Act that came into force in Cheshire in July 1903. The four foundation managers elected for the school were the Rev. Owen (Chairman), Mr. A. Lowe, Mr. H. Barnston J.P., and Mr. Brereton of Rowley Hill. The Parish Council was represented by the Rev. Davies, the Congregational Minister. Now the excessive burden of management was taken away from the managers although the school at that time was in a most satisfactory condition with five excellent teachers and a good balance in hand. Perhaps the main criticism came in 1904 when there was disagreement amongst the managers over sectarian teaching. Little could be done however and such teaching had to continue due to a clause in the Trust Deed which stated that it must be in accordance with the doctrine of the Church of England.

At one time there was a school at Churton but this closed in 1918. Afterwards the building was used as a village hall and church room and became known as *Churton Mission Hall*. It was extended and modernised in 1979. *The Farndon County Primary School*

The new school was erected in 1969 adjacent to the original buildings. Today it consists of three well-equipped infant classrooms, the hall, the kitchen, the headmaster's study, and a staff room. Up until 1980 the old school was used as an annexe for juniors. It was then finally replaced by four mobile classrooms which are situated behind the new buildings. At present the school has 186 pupils with eight teachers (including the headmaster).

Play School

There is a flourishing Play School today which is run by Mrs. Klaces (Auntie Jessie to the children), with helpers Auntie Lorna, Auntie Prim, and Auntie June. Three mornings each week this is

held in the *Memorial Hall* where young children can sing, play, paint and rehearse their concerts.

Headmasters of Farndon

1701-1709	Edward Palin
1716	Samuel Ridley
1725-1728	Robert Dutton
1775	John Palin
1850	Henry Holgreaves
1860	Samuel and Mary Mellor
1871 (or earlier)-1875	Robert Roberts
1876-1879	Samuel Phillips May
1879-1884	John Williams
1884-1886	James W. Swapper and Mrs. Emily Swapper
1886-1894	John Davies
1894-1921	H. C. Pennington
1921-1955	A. G. Richards
1955-1974	T. A. Ord
1974-	G. Bennett

VILLAGE INNS

The Masons Arms mil lose its charms, The Raven it will fly, We'll turn the Greyhound upside down, And drink the Nags Head dry'.

So runs a local rhyme of the nineteenth century, foretelling the fates of the four public houses in the centre of Farndon. The *Masons Arms* was relieved of its 'charms' and its licence about 1928; the original building of the *Raven* 'flew', and the existing building was erected in 1900. The fate of the *Greyhound* is somewhat understated, as it was entirely destroyed by fire on 12th January 1905. The *Nags Head* may not have been the only public house to be drunk dry in the last war, but it was forced to close on more than one occasion during licensing hours as the dray had not been able to deliver.

The Masons Arms was licensed prior to 1841, and in 1891 was known to be a tied house to Farndon Brewery, although by 1903 ownership had transferred to Pank Street Brewery, Chester. At

that time the licensee was Ralph Fowles, whose family held the licence until its closure in 1936. It was originally a sandstone building.

The first mention of the *Raven Hotel* comes from the Courant of 1st March 1785 in which it is noted that 'Tuesday last died Mr. Pulford of the Raven in Farndon'. The existing hotel is an eccentrically gaudy black and white building of 1900, with a central plaque depicting a black raven, for which local sandstone was used extensively. Amongst the licensees listed in the Ale House Registers in the nineteenth century were George Lanceley (1827), John Cliffe (1850), and Joseph Harris (1891) when it was a tied house to Farndon Brewery, ownership having been transferred to Bents Brewery by 1903. At the turn of the century it was known to have very good accommodation with eight letting bedrooms. For the first quarter of the century the McCreadie family held the tenancy and were followed by James A. Steen. It was after the death of Mrs. Nell Steen in 1925, soon after they had taken over the tenancy, that the Raven ghost appeared. She was buried in Farndon Churchyard, with her only child, and the gravestone itself is noteworthy as it has an effigy of Mrs. Steen's face carved in the marble. She herself is said to have roamed through the Raven until a blessing ceremony was carried out in the mid 1970s by the vicar in an attempt to lay her to rest. Prior to this her spirit was said to have been so active that it resulted in the landlord's son leaving home one morning, after being terrified at the apparition of a woman on the previous night. A brewery joiner subsequently refused to return to the Raven, after hearing strange noises that emanated from the supposedly empty building when he was working in the cellar. A depot manager from the brewery and various guests have also been frightened by voices or apparitions—always female. This may account for the extraordinary number of tenants since Mrs. Steen's demise. By 1939 S. F. Borton was the licensee, followed by Jack and Doris Wilson, Mrs. Ella Rolfe, Clarence Ronald Jones, Victor Barnard and Harry McCarthey.

The 1970s also saw many changes: Maldwyn Warburton and Peter Smith (1970-72), Alf and Jean Swallow (1972-78), Colin and Janet Burroughs (1978-79), Barry and Joan Fisher (1979-80) to the present tenants John and Mary Morgan.

Moving down the hill towards the bridge, the next public house is the former coaching inn, the *Nags Head*, which also used to be a farm on the Barnston Estate, and to where, even after the sale to Border Brewery in 1948, the other tenants came once a year to pay their rents.

The leaded light over the front door depicts a nag's head in white glass with a red surround, this being part of the Barnston family crest. The cellar is hewn out of solid sandstone, and there was a well where the existing car port stands. In 1891 there were three stables with seven stalls, which remained until 1970 when they were

dismantled, and the oak used to make the window boxes which now adorn the front of the building.

Amongst former licensees of the *Nags Head* were Charles Wright (1827), Daniel Garner (1850), John Posnett (1864), and George P. Posnett (1874). From 1875 until 1931, when it was still a free house, the tenants were John Jones and his family. The first John Jones, who was there until 1918, would not admit women, but as early as 1914 was advertising 'every accommodation for cyclists and motorists'.

After the Jones family, Hugh Lloyd tenanted the house, followed by Jack and Myfanwy Moore. The Barnston Estate sold it to Border Brewery in 1948. After Hector Anthony Williams, the *Nags Head* was managed by Norman and Eleanor Sewell, and was then tenanted by Philip and Maureen Fuge 1966-77. Roy and Ethel Leek held the tenancy for a few months that year, until the present tenants, Margaret and Geoff Locker arrived.

All three public houses in the centre of the village benefitted and prospered from the Denbighshire licensing laws, which prevented the sale of liquor on Sundays, and resulted in imbibers flocking over the border from Wales in buses, cars, bicycles and on foot every Sunday. The excesses to which these incomers drank incurred a degree of displeasure from the local inhabitants, who grew tired of the sickness, drunken fights, and inebriated bodies which littered the road as a result.

The first public house they reached on crossing the bridge was the *Greyhound Hotel*.

The original building was thatched, and the Rev. Owen's diaries reporting on the fire of 1905, state that:

The tenants, Mrs. Fleet and her children only just escaping, lost everything. The Farndon fire engine refused to work owing to old age, but the Wrexham 'Steamer' saved adjoining houses; had the gale been blowing as it had for some days, half the village would have been burnt'.

Before the commencement of John Fleet's tenancy at the turn of the century, the Ale House Registers record the names of George Dutton (1827), Thomas Clark (1850), Thomas Townsend (1860), Abraham Thomas (1874), and Matthew Barrow (1891), by which time it was tied to Chester Northgate Brewery, and offered eight letting bedrooms.

In 1914 the landlord is recorded as being G. E. Chesterman, followed by Miss J. E. Jones (1928), J. A. Loughlin (1939), Miss Meadows, Arthur Birch, Arthur Wilkins, and Peggy and Jimmy Grant (1961-79). The present tenants are Christopher and Wendy Gray, of Gray's Pottery, the Ship, Handbridge, famous for their pottery 'Cheshire Cats'. They have obtained planning permission to convert the old stables at the *Greyhound* to a pottery.

There were two public houses in Farndon parish not mentioned in the rhyme; the *Cock o' Barton*, and the *Red Lion* at Churton.

The Red Lion was a single storey sandstone building with a thatched roof. It appears to have ceased trading in 1928, but it is interesting to note that in the Ale House Register of 1927, the guarantor to the then publican, Thomas Gregory, was a John Speed, weaver, of Churton-by-Farndon. Amongst other of its known licensees were William Letson in the 1850s, Richard Williams in the 1860s, Thomas Bell (1874) and from 1892 Samuel Williamson and his family appear to have been there until the early twenties.

The *Cock o' Barton* is an old coaching inn, and the stables, which still stand, could accommodate up to 16 horses. With the coming of the railway, the stage coach traffic ceased, but the landlord operated a horse drawn taxi service to Broxton station two miles away. The original coach house and timber framed groom's cottages are enclosed within the yard of the inn. It is not known how the *Cock* came by its name. The place name Barton generally refers to bear baiting, but there is no proof that it ever occurred there. Cockfighting, however, took place for the amusement of travellers whilst their horses were being changed. A seventeenth century wainscote chair was sold at Wingett's in the 1960s, inscribed 'Cock o' Barton', but the then landlord, Leslie Nicholas, failed in his bid to return the chair to its former home, where it was believed to have been used by an official at the cock fights.

The present owners are John and Diana Hair. It was formerly owned by the Carden Estate, and until John Hair purchased it in 1965, one of the conditions of the tenancy was that a room be left vacant each week for the tenants to pay their dues to the estate clerk. Amongst earlier licensees were Thomas Harrison (1827), John Jones for at least 30 years in the latter part of the century, and then the Lewis family. The Wilbraham family held the tenancy from early this century until 1939, when Leslie Nicholas took over the tenancy until its sale in 1965.



Lock-up, Farndon

In addition to the six public houses and until early in this century Farndon had its own small brewery. Latterly it was in the ownership of Joseph Salmon, who also farmed. He died in 1907, aged 68, when apparently brewing ceased. The Brewery itself was converted from the sandstone tithe barn, shown on the 1735 tithe map. Some of the cellars ran under the main Farndon to Chester road and lately have caused problems for the present owners, Tony and Jenny Gittins. In 1974 they had to be filled in with sand in order to prevent road subsidence.

The Salmon family sold the Brewery, *Brewery House* and the various parcels of land belonging to it, to the Lowe family in 1913. It was sold subsequently to the Pinningtons, and, in 1954, to the Nicholas family who lived there for 20 years. Mrs. M. Nicholas recalls that on humid days she could often smell the scent of malt which had saturated the sandstone. A descendant of the Salmon family who was baptised at Farndon church in 1908, Maj. John Salmon Fletcher, still lives at Oxton near Birkenhead.

Of the six public houses described, the *Masons Arms* and the *Red Lion* would have been classified as ale houses, which enjoyed great popularity in the nineteenth century, whilst the others would have been described as inns or taverns. A tavern would generally admit women. In 1628 Bishop Earle described a tavern as being

'A degree above an ale house, where men may get drunk with more credit or apology . . . even in the taverns, ladies of quality would smoke with the men and drink their crowned cups roundly'.

It was in 1869 that licensed houses came under magisterial control, 'and the vice of gin drinkers was checked'.

SPORTS AND PASTIMES

'Go to Holt and see Fame Races'

Although the races have long since gone this saying still lingers on in the village and means, so it is understood, 'to take an unnecessary length of time to say something'.

Farndon Races used to be held on *Farndon Hay* which is the area extending over 100 acres situated near a sharp bend in the river towards Chester and to the north west of the village. The racecourse was not actually the first (as is sometimes suggested), but was certainly one of the earliest in the country and was established in 1631. The events were thronged with racegoers, mainly from Chester, who watched from the far bank. It is said that the races in Farndon were held in honour of St. Chad and they

took place on the Monday following his feast day with the 'house with the Flemish gable' in Church Lane being occupied by the jockeys for many years.

It would seem that racing at Chester started about 1511. From 1623 a single silver bell was given as the prize for the race known as *St. George's Plate* (so named because it took place on St. George's Day) which was run round the Roodee as at present. About 1631, owing to a disagreement with one of the City Sheriffs, the contest was removed from Chester to Farndon and the 'Town Crier of the City received 2/6 annually from the Corporation for proclaiming St. George's Plate at Farndon' where he was also the official Starter. This race returned to the Roodee in 1700 although others continued to be run at Farndon for over a century.

There is in existence an oil painting representing James I on horseback at a race meeting in Cheshire, and some say that this was painted at Farndon. Since the King died some six years before the races were moved, however, this cannot be the case. Nevertheless there are some authentic references to the early races at Farndon such as the Chirk Castle accounts for 1664 when, on 16th May, 'Richard Griffith paid Henry Lloyd of Chester for 27 yds. of Green Kiersey to make rideing suits for Ffarne race'. Also, in 1691, on 7th March the diary of a Chester Recorder mentions that 'this morning we rode to Fame race where I run against Sir Edmund Ashton, Mrs. Morte, Mr. Mackworth and Capt. Warburton. Mrs. Morte won the race'. So even in those days lady jockeys were not unknown. On 8th March he went again 'where Sir Henry Gough won the plate from my Lord Cholmondeley'. In March 1676 Hugh Grosvenor notes that he gave to his servant '£6 to bett on my Master's horse at fame races, and all lost'.

On 8th September 1708 Deputy Registrar Prescott described an incident that took place at Farndon Races:—

'About 11.00 Dr. Thane (Archdeacon of Chester), myself, and Jack (his son), mount for Farndon. Came to Inces' about 12.00 where Mr. Egerton is surrounded by his friends. We dine and ye horses are drawn to ye field about 3. About *Vi* hour after he (Mr. Egerton) and Mr. Minshull start, he early taps and leads him. At ye turn in ye 3 mile course Minshull slip a pole and darts directly on him and his horse, bruises him on ye thigh, and shocks him and his horse severely. Mr. Egerton loses a stirrup and, betwixt recovery of that and himself, the horse stumbles and falls. Mr. Egerton amazed falls off and is not able to stand from ye stroak. His horse (is) recovered back and farther than ye place of ye fall, (and) he remounts, gallops in and is weighed but disturbed. The gentlemen explain at ye unfair and barborous action of Minshull and adjudge the wager (50 guineas) to Mr. Egerton. Minshull confesses (from shooting ye pole) he had lost. Yet, after, on pretence Mr. Egerton did not remount when he fell, r ode ye course again'.

Mr. Egerton appears to have been somewhat severely injured, as three weeks later Prescott records a visit paid to him. 'To Mr. Egerton who from his Blow was in bed'.

Gradually racing at Farndon declined and in some years the meeting did not take place. In 1750, for example, a notice appeared 'respecting the distemper among horned cattle raging at Farndon and Holt, and consequent abandonment of Races at the former place on 5th and 6th March'.

The end came in 1803 when a decline in the popularity of the racecourse resulted in the following entries in the Racing Calendar which are self explanatory:—

1800	17th March Monday.	The Annual Plate—3 miles.
	1.	Mr Hemings Cadet
	2.	Sir Watkyn Wynn's Caper
	3.	Mr. Harris Fairy
	on 18th March Tuesday	
	Annual Plate was walked over for by	
	Mr. Hemings	Cadet
1801	16th March	
	Mr. Harris	Elvira
	beat one horse and walked over 17th March	
1802	15th and 16th March	
	Sir Watkin Wynn	Alexander the Great
	beat two runners and walked over on 16th	
1803	14th and 15th March	
	Mr. Baxley's	Nautilus
	walked over for two Annual Prizes	

The last entry in the Racing Calendar for 1803 ends with the words 'Farndon discontinued', and never since, at the village where the Flat Racing season used to begin, has organised horse racing ever taken place.

Perhaps due to the races of two centuries ago, however, Farndon men still have the reputation of being keen horsemen and in one form or another horsemanship is still practised in the village. This borders the limits of the Wynnstay country and until the last war hounds met at the *Nag's Head*; nowadays the hunt still meets at the *Cock O'Barton*. Maj, J. Fletcher, who once stayed at the Brewery, recalls that his grandfather sometimes hunted three or four times a week. Of the other country pursuits shooting is still practised to a limited extent and some pheasants are reared, but, with the River Dee acting as a parish boundary, it is understandable that the most popular sport today is fishing.

In Ormerod's history there is a painting, dated 1817, by G. Pickering which shows the river with fishing boats and men netting salmon by the bridge. Today the boats and the nets have gone but, during the open season, anglers can still be seen fishing from the banks. There used to be a man living in the village named Bob Lightfoot who, until the 1950s was a regular supporter of fancy

dress parades as 'Old Mother Riley'. Not only was he an early member of the Darby and Joan Club, but he was also an ardent, if unorthodox, fisherman. He is best remembered for his skill in catching pike with a pitchfork and tossing them up on to the bridge. Passers-by would give encouragement by throwing down coins to him. Bob Lightfoot died during the 1970s.

The Holt and Farndon Angling Club was formed in 1975. The Secretary was Mr. Peter Cosgrove until 1980, when his position was taken by Mr. Reg Williams of Holt. The Chairman today is Mr. Tommy Davies. The Club has won many competitions and produced a large number of international anglers.

The earlier mention of the *Cock O' Barton* might suggest the old 'sport' of bear baiting, for it is often argued that all places of this name were used for this purpose. In this case, however, it is more probable that the inn was used for cockfighting and there is no evidence to suggest otherwise. Indeed, Dodgson gives the derivation of *Barley Farm* for the local place name rather than the 'farm where bear baiting was practised' which is the alternative. No doubt the more gentle customs of May Pole and Morris dancing were popular in the village in olden times but although both are mentioned in reports of carnivals and garden parties in Victorian times there are no other records.

Some mention of indoor entertainments was given in the Parish magazine of 1896 under the heading 'How to amuse the people'.

This reported that in the evenings the school was frequently opened in the winter for a variety of purposes. In former times there were 'Penny Readings' which were tales of a simple character which were much enjoyed. Concerts next became fashionable and then came Theatricals. Fourthly there were Dances—but these brought complaints. To quote from the magazine: Firstly, they were too frequent and domestic servants were always asking for leave to attend them. Secondly, the closing hour was too late. Thirdly, young people attended them without chaperones.

Times seem to have changed.

More recently the Memorial Hall has been used for such functions rather than the school. At a public meeting held in 1920 under the chairmanship of Mr. Noah Parker of *Oak House*, it was decided to erect this Memorial Hall to the memory of men who served and had lost their lives in the First World War. Money was raised by voluntary subscriptions, and on 22nd September 1921 a site was purchased from Mr. George Jones the butcher. This was situated in Church Lane, opposite to the Church, and on it was built Farndon War Memorial Hall in 1922. The first two trustees were Sir Harry Barnston M.P. and Philip Durning Holt of Sibbersfield Hall. It continued to be used for public meetings and entertainments until 1975 when, the population having grown, an extension had to be added. This was built in 1978 and opened on 22nd April of that year by the Mayor of Chester, Mrs. Sheila

Garston. The architect was Mr. Peter Rowlandson and the builder was Mr. Davies, both of Farndon.

Whilst on the subject of indoor entertainment the *Farndon Cinema* must be mentioned. It used to be housed in a building which is now a warehouse for industrial sewing machines. The old cinema was built in 1922 by Mr. Thomas Roycroft and run by his family as a hobby. It was particularly well patronised for children's matinees during the last war when it was run by the founder's grandson, Mr. Lawrence Kingston-Quayle, who also acted as projectionist. His sister, Miss Gloria Kingston-Quayle, gave ballet lessons and formed the first Brownie pack. She died in Chester in 1979. In 1941 Mr. E. Taylor leased the premises and the cinema held about 100 who paid between 8d. and 1/2 for admission (or 4d. to 1/- for children). The building ceased to be used for this purpose about 1956 but Mr. Kingston-Quayle and his family still live on the premises. Today he is a photographer.

The Band hut stands between the Church and the river and it is here that practices are held every Friday night. Its President is Mr. H. Cornes. This Brass Band has been in existence for about 100 years and has had success in various competitions. It plays in the—Groves at Chester in the summer and has a thriving Junior Section.

In Farndon it can be seen that there is no shortage of sports or pastimes—either indoors or out.

Scouts, Guides, Cubs and Brownies are all active in the village in addition to other youth organisations. Cricket, Football, and Badminton are all popular. There is even a Farndon team which plays in Division I of the Chester Quiz League under the name of 'The Raven' where home matches are played. Teams of four are selected from a 'panel' of eight.

In 1973 the vicar arranged for a Cricket team from Farndon to use the cricket pitch on the Eaton Estate. A team was formed of local men; but not all from Farndon. Today they play, as they did then, as the Eaton Team.

Although football has probably been played in the village since the last century there was no team in Farndon between the mid 1950s and 1964. During the 1920s Mr. J. A. Steen (of the Raven) and Mr. A. E. Richards (School Master) were keen on sports of all kinds and the *Raven Hotel* became the headquarters of a football team of some merit. Players in those days included Tom Millington, Jack Dunning, Frank Jones, William Soden, G. Thomas, Jack Thomas, G. Huxley, E. Huxley, Ted Jones, W. Poston, Reg. Ince, Ted Ince, J. Mulligan, Ben Soden, Jackie Williams, and N. Williams. Matches were played against the Chester team, Brickfields Athletics, and Mr. Richards organised school teams to meet those from the King's School and the Chester Grammar School. Mrs. Harding of *Belmont House* was a special supporter of the boys teams and provided teas and entertainment for them when they were successful. In 1964 the team known as Farndon Dee Rangers was formed to play in Saturday League

matches, and in 1971/2 Farndon United Football Club was formed to play in Sunday League games. During the mid 1970s the second Club was successful in winning both Section C and the League Cup, while in the following year it was Runner-up in Section B and again won the League Cup. During the late 1970s these Clubs amalgamated to form the present Farndon F.C. to play on both Saturdays and Sundays in the Chester and District League. Among their successes they won the Tilston Cup in both 1972 and 1973. A Youth team was run in the late 1960s in both the Wrexham and Chester Leagues.

The Badminton Club now meets on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at the Memorial Hall and at the Sports and Social Club on Tuesday evenings. It was started as a Tennis Club only in March 1952 by Gwilym Penk (Chairman) and Charles Griffiths. The badminton section was formed about 1957/8 by Cliff Fairbanks but the tennis section came to an end in 1978 on the extending of the Memorial Hall. New tennis courts are now being constructed at the Sports and Social Club. Sue Rowlandson is the present secretary of the Badminton Club.

Churton is particularly interested in athletics and had a football team in the Chester and District League early in the century. A photograph of the 1911 team shows that almost all the players were local. They met and changed in the White Horse Hotel which was rebuilt in 1901.

Athletics, walking and cycling became popular soon after the end of the Boer War. Roland Ince formed a committee in Farndon and immediately afterwards Walter Huxley helped to form another in Churton. Walter (known as 'Little Wat', for he was barely 5 ft. 6 ins. tall) was renowned throughout Cheshire for his prowess in the long-jump. On one occasion he defeated the English champion and sometimes the jumping pit had to be extended to accommodate his mighty leaps. Money prizes for the Open events at Churton attracted noted sprinters from among professional footballers. Tommy Millington, the Everton winger later to be a Powderhall Sprint winner, once swept the board at Churton.

Since 1945, Churton Carnival has fostered friendly competition between local athletes, provided rich entertainment, and raised funds for village activities.

With the help of the school master already mentioned, Mr. Richards, pupils in the 1920s were encouraged to play tennis, bowls, snooker and billiards. From these beginnings a very good billiards team developed which did well in competitions. Among the noted players were W. Redrope, G. W. Penk, W. Jones, T. W. Simon, Albert Lowe, J. Jones and J. Chadwick.

In the early part of the century boating on the river was very much a social event, and, from Liverpool especially, many would come over on Sundays for picnics. The heyday of boating at Farndon was between 1910 and 1920 when people would still dress

for the occasion; the men in white flannels and straw boaters, and the women in summer frocks and carrying parasols.

Until 1974 boats could still be hired out and the facilities were provided by Mr. George Jones of the *Boat House*. There were then 10 boats on the river for which the charge was 50p (four people in a boat).

The last major events on the river were the Boat Races of 1972 and 1973 for which men, women and children could enter. The principal event was for the teams entered by each of the hotels in Holt and Farndon. To be eligible competitors had to work, drink, or live within a radius of four miles and many practised for six weeks before taking part.

In 1973 the Starter was Mr. Norman Davies and the oarsmen were accompanied, for safety reasons, by P. C. Thomas in a motor launch. The winners were the White Horse A team. Other prizes were awarded to Farndon School (Ladies Race), Ian Swallow (Canoe Race), and a Junior Race was won by the Boys team who were presented with a cup by Mr. A. Hughes of the Academy Garage. The same evening over 1,000 people attended a Tramps Ball in a marquee by the riverside which lasted until midnight.

It was, perhaps, the revival of the Carnival that brought boating on the Dee to an end.

THE BRIDGE

Although the Romans were renowned for their road building, after their departure the art was lost and even in Medieval times the state of the highways was frequently referred to as being deplorable. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence to suggest that the principal road through Farndon was used as a saltway in earliest times and was used by the Welsh to obtain salt direct from Nantwich during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Indeed it seems that the route was once known as The Welshman's Way, as a charter of 1314 refers to 'common lands in Bulkeley lying between Walesmanswey, Peckforton, and Bickerton'. Another Bulkeley deed of the same date mentions 'common pasture from the way called Walchmonstreeete'. It therefore appears certain that these were the old names for the road from Wales via Farndon and Broxton which runs up the hill as Salters Lane and round by Gallantry Bank and the old copper mines to Bulkeley.

Even in Medieval times highways consisted mainly of tracks with (in some cases) causeways or causeys by the side which were about

four or five feet wide. These were paved with cobbles for horses but there were no special facilities for carts or waggons. Although, by the Highway Act of 1555, parishes were made responsible for their upkeep the methods used were of the crudest description. Ruts and hollows were filled in with sand or loose stones which were flung out again when the next cart passed over them. The art of road construction was only really rediscovered in the early nineteenth century, and even in 1753, it is recorded that a journey from Manchester to London took 11 days on foot. Stage coaches were, however, travelling from Chester to London in the reign of James II (1685-88), and it is known that there was a turnpike from Farndon to Broxton before 1820. There used to be a toll bar on the Barton Road and the toll house was rebuilt quite recently.

For those travelling from Nantwich to North Wales of course the great barrier has always been the River Dee which touches Farndon where the river has cut through the glacial drift and exposed the sandstones beneath. It has been said that in Roman times the river flowed in a more south-westerly course than at present, and its flow westwards would have been less restricted as the causeway at Chester had not been constructed.

From the evidence it would seem that in 1316 the only way for travellers to cross the river would have been by ferry. This service continued until it became badly disorganised by the Civil War when a local man encroached upon the rights of the Grosvenor family by starting a new service by means of coracles. This resulted in a petition from the 'poor inhabitants of Farndon, Churton, and Aldford' to Sir Richard Grosvenor 'That they may enjoy the benefit of the said coracles till times be better settled that they may all resort without danger to your accustomed ferry'. The petition bore 30 signatures including those of Geo. Bostock, Lawrence Eaton (Rector of Aldford) and E. Bostock. It was delivered on 7th June 1645.

It is said that coracles, the one-man skin or canvas boats, were used for fishing at Farndon during the last century, and at Bangor on Dee in the early 1900s. The picture in Ormerod's history, dated 1817, suggests the importance then of catching salmon by netting, but a writer in 1800 considers that even by that year it had much diminished. Although hardly a 'fishing tale', the acute bend just above the bridge is still known as the Maiden's Arbour because, it is reputed, a mermaid was once seen there.

Regarding the present state of the river, Mr. Alan Weston, of the Welsh Water Authority, writes:—

The water levels in the Dee at Farndon have only been continuously monitored since 1973. At low summer flows the river levels are partly controlled by the level of Chester weir some 20 kms (by river) downstream. The river between Farndon and Chester at low flows is virtually a 'pond'. High spring tides sweep over Chester weir and can cause rises in water level of

0.5m or more at Farndon at low flows and typically affect the flow/levels to varying degrees for up to 30% of the time (mostly during the summer months).

At high winter flows the Holt meadows are flooded for a few days each year.

Typical water levels in summer are around 4.6 metres above Ordnance Datum Newlyn (a place in Cornwall) while winter flows can easily raise levels to 8.0 metres AODN. The depth of the water downstream of the bridge is around 1.5 to 2 metres at low flows'.

Everyone living in the parish will know about the Dee flooding. The biggest flood in this century is said to be that of February 1946 when the water stretched over the road on the Holt side. At this time cattle had to be saved from the river at Churton by the use of army 'ducks'.

There appears little doubt that the bridge between Farndon and Holt was built in the middle of the fourteenth century to allow for greater movement of cattle and traffic. It has nine arches and recesses were built above its cut-water buttresses; the recesses being sensibly provided for pedestrians to escape hastily from passing carts. The bridge was built with local sandstone and there is evidence to suggest that this was quarried from the vicinity of the old ferry crossing which was nearby. Obviously it was the builders' intention that their bridge would be strong and adequately constructed to withstand the passage of time. A tower and fortified gate were built for its defence and the reinforced arch below where the tower once stood is still known as the Lady's Arch, perhaps because this was once a small chapel dedicated to Our Lady. Maintenance and the cost of repairs to its structure are not merely twentieth century problems for the custodians of the bridge, and records have been discovered that repairs have been regularly carried out over the centuries. For example:— 6th March 1746.

'Mason worke done at ye battlement of farndon bridge, at ye both ends nyest (nearest) ye town by William Sellers. Myself one days 1s.6d. John Powell one day 1s.4d. for two new crisis and carriage 8d. for two cramps 8d., for time 6d., for 4 pound of lead 5d. Total 5s.1d. 22nd April 1747

An estimate of rebuilding ye foundations of one of ye pillars of farndon bridge, it being in ye hundred of Broxton and ye County of Chester. Carefully viewed by William Sellers, mason—ye foundations is being intierly washed away by forceable stream, that runs directly against it, for rebuilding that breach after a substantial manner, and I obligate myself to put twenty load of stone that (loon or lum) to preserve ye pillar which amounts to £6.5.6d. (sgd) William Sellers. Sworne in court by J. B. Cryers'.

Reference has already been made to Thomas Pennant's comments on Farndon when he passed through in 1778 but he also mentioned the bridge 'of ten arches, with a vestige of a guard house in the middle, the date 1345 was preserved until very lately on a stone over the arch called the Lady's Arch'. It will also be remembered that a letter of 1767 noted the presence of a 'Guard House', which might indicate that the guard house and the date inscription disappeared in the early 1770s.

During the Civil War Sir Marmaduke Langdale, the Royalist commander, crossed over the bridge into Wales just prior to the disastrous engagement at Rowton Moor which was watched by Charles I from the walls at Chester. Sir Marmaduke wanted the King to know as speedily as possible that he had crossed the river and was pressing on the Parliamentary troops. He therefore gave orders to Col. Shakerley to convey his message to the King. Shakerley had no wish to cross the bridge again so, instead, he galloped towards Chester and eventually crossed the Dee, in a wooden tub, his horse swimming by him.

Until 1866 all users of the bridge were required to pay a toll and the Toll Board of 1840 is today in the possession of Mr. J. Powell of Holt. From this it can be seen that the charge for a dog on a lead was $\frac{1}{2}$ d., a horse 1d., and a cart and horse 2d.

Perhaps not everyone who has fought so valiantly to preserve the bridge in recent years will have read the book on the River Dee by J. S. Howson, the Dean of Chester, written in 1875. In his comments on Farndon bridge he says 'Quite recently it escaped very narrowly from demolition; and we may congratulate all lovers of the ancient and the picturesque that the county authorities on one side of the stream could not agree with the county authorities on the other'.

How strange that less than a century later the same authorities cannot agree on a date on which to commence the building of a by-pass which would save the bridge from further destruction.

Howson also comments on the Lady Arch window 'Above the 6th arch on the right hand side going towards Holt the parapet is much thicker and stronger. Looking over the side you will observe beautiful stone mullion windows'.

In October of 1901 the Rev. Owen has more to say about repairs. 'The bridge was under repair by the Cheshire County Council. The roadway was taken up and cement poured in. A workman threw into the stone breaking machine a very ancient carved cross. Great inconvenience was caused by the bridge being closed, but it was opened on Thursday'. One can only hazard a guess at the disruption that would be caused to both villages if such an occurrence happened today.

Among the many changes that have come about during the twentieth century is that of an increased flow of traffic in villages everywhere. The A534 which passes through Farndon and Holt and

over the Dee is a main link between the Wrexham Industrial Estate and the M6, and this road is also heavily used by tourist traffic. After many years of being promised a by-pass the two communities of Farndon and Holt eventually held a public meeting at the Community Centre in February 1974 at which the chairman was Mr. Frank Nuttall. At the meeting a great deal of frustration and concern were expressed at the respective councils' reluctance to alleviate the villagers from the intolerable burdens of noise, pollution and danger to life. An action committee was formed of Mr. Parry, Mr. T. Walker, Mrs. B. Davies, Mrs. C. Bellis, Mr. P. Aubrey, Mrs. Cordery, Mr. Graham Palmer, Mr. David Griffiths, Mr. K. Allanson, Mr. J. Hillyer, Mrs. Enid Hughes and Mr. A. Stewart. Some of these have since left the committee and, in 1980, were replaced by Mrs. P. Fish, Mr. M. Kelly, Mr. B. Payne, Mrs. Clewley, Mr. W. Booth, Mr. Meacher Jones and Mr. and Mrs. Caplin. As yet, however, the problem remains unresolved.

The fabric of this picturesque medieval bridge is at present being repeatedly damaged. After a great deal of protest a width restriction of 9 ft. 6 inches was eventually imposed. But this only came after two vehicles were routed over the bridge which were in fact wider than it, and these could only be removed by ripping holes in the walls. Peaceful demonstrations and deputations to County Hall and even to Parliament, whilst raising support, have produced little constructive action from either Clwyd or Cheshire Councils. In 1970, as a safety measure, metal rails were added to the bridge wall, following an accident.

The possible loss of business to local tradespeople which a by-pass might bring must of course be considered, but today the villagers are becoming increasingly concerned about the effect heavy continental trucks have on the environment. In the present economic climate no by-pass can be started before 1987 and by then it may be too late to save the bridge.

Although disheartened, however, the Action Committee and the Parish Councils have not given up the fight to rid the villages of juggernauts and resistance to them will continue. The bridge has stood too long and survived too many battles for twentieth century traffic to bring about its final destruction.

BARNSTON OF CREWE HILL

For 600 years Barnstons have lived in Farndon and for much of that time various members of the family have been the principal landowners in the parish while others have served their country in the church, in the army, and in parliament.

Their pedigree is recorded in some detail in Ormerod's history of Cheshire and relevant extracts from this showing the main line of descent, are shown on page 99.

From this it can be seen that the family adopted the name of the village from which it originated—Barnston in Wirral. Hugh de Berneston⁽¹⁾ is the first member for which there is a known date and he was living there about 1293, but he is also known to have owned lands in Worleston in 1301. The first Barnston to be described as 'of Chirton' was Robert de Berneston⁽²⁾ in 1380.

Over 50 years later Urian de Berneston⁽³⁾ was named as a trustee of the estates of the Leche family in Garden in 1434 and 1449. It was perhaps due to his marriage to Katherine, daughter of Edward de Crewe, that lands in that township first came to be owned by the Barnston family. It is said that the ancient lords who bore the name Crewe were descendants of Sir Thomas Crewe in the hundred of Nantwich. They became extinct in the direct line about the time of Henry IV (1399-1413) in the person of Jenkin Crewe, whose co-heiresses Margaret and Alice married severally Walter Dod of Broxton and Thomas Bird. The descendants of the latter divided the estates between the families of Stringer and Catherall in the reign of Henry VIII (1509-47). At the commencement of the eighteenth century the manor was the property of Thomas Crewe of Holt from whom it passed to the Crewes of Nantwich before it was purchased by Sir John Egerton, Bart, together with the titles of the township. It was subsequently sold to the family of Dutton and later to the Barnstons. It is worth noting the Welsh connection in the fifteenth century. The name 'Uren' comes from the old Welsh word meaning 'town-born', and the alternative spellings of 'Urien' or 'Urian' are Arthurian.

A later member of the Barnston family, William Barnston⁽⁴⁾, had two sons. The younger son, John, was prebendary of Salisbury, and chaplain to the Lord Chancellor Ellesmere. He died in 1642 and was founder of a Hebrew lectureship at Brasenose College, Oxford. At *Crewe Hill* today there is still the vinaigrette mounted in the top of a walking stick which was used by Prebendary Barnston to protect himself from the plague at Chester in 1603. His brother, Thomas Barnston⁽⁵⁾, succeeded to the estate in 1620 and died in April 1646.

The son of Thomas and Elizabeth was William Barnston⁽⁶⁾ of Churton who was a zealous Royalist in the Civil War during which he was taken prisoner. It is he who is represented in the curious painted window in the Barnston chapel of Farndon Church. The account of his delinquency shows that he left his house and went to Oxford remaining there whilst it was a Garrison for the King—he adhered to that Party and remained in Oxford till it was surrendered. He was seised of an estate tail in possession to him and the heirs males of his body, of and in a Capital message, situate in Churton, Co. Chester, and of divers demesne lands and

tenements etc. in Churton, Farndon, Aldford, and Overmarsh worth before the troubles per annum . . . £143.10.0'. Various other leases and tithes are then listed and the fact that 'he had houses burnt to the value of £500. He produced certificates from his neighbours of his fair carriage towards them before his surrender'. On 16th January 1646-7 his Fine was fixed at £567 on a basis "of one-tenth.

Finally there is an affidavit of the Compounder, sworn 23rd December 1646, in which it is stated 'that his dwelling and the greater part of his Inheritance lay about a reputed mile from Holt Castle which for three years then last past and was then or very recently kept as a garrison for the King to the great loss of the Compounder and that he had eleven dwelling houses with the barns and other outhouses appurtenant burnt and much ruined by the forces of that Garrison and the meadowing attached to those tenements had long been and was then detained from them (the tenements) by the Commander and by the force of that Castle and much spoiled. Whereby and other farms the Leaguer lying so long there he had been damnified to the extent of £500'.

William's son, John Barnston⁽⁷⁾, married Alice, the sole heiress of Thomas Trafford, and so acquired the property at Trafford. In a similar way John's great grandson, Robert Barnston⁽⁸⁾, came into possession of the Acton property when he married Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Whitmore Acton of Shropshire.

About 1749 Robert and Elizabeth Barnston had a son, Roger⁽⁹⁾ who became the first Colonel of the Royal Cheshire Militia. Indeed he played an active part in raising this force in expectation of Napoleon's invasion. For some time his unit was quartered on the south coast at Brighton as a precautionary measure. In 1800 he was High Sheriff of Cheshire. He was married to Anne, daughter of Rev. John Parker of Astle whose wife was a Miss Gartside, and it was through the Gartside family that the Barnstons inherited *Crewe Hill*. Roger Barnston's portrait, painted at Forest House, Chester, still hangs over the chimney piece in the hall at *Crewe Hill*. He died at the age of 88 years in 1837 leaving the estate to his only surviving son.

Roger Harry Barnston⁽¹⁰⁾ was a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the County Palatine. He married first Selina, daughter of William Makepeace Thackeray M.D. of Chester, and, second, Emma, daughter of James Boydell of Rossett. He had seven children by his first wife and three by his second. At this time he owned one third of Crewe township while the remainder was still in the ownership of the Duttons.

Two sons of Roger Harry and Selina Barnston served with distinction during the Crimean War and their letters home were published in 1904. Their names were Maj. William Barnston⁽¹¹⁾ and Maj. Roger Barnston⁽¹²⁾, and the correspondence covers the period from 1854 to 1858 and thus includes some letters from India at the

time of the Mutiny. Obviously the letters were written by two very brave men, and although, to modern readers, some passages may appear callous, undoubtedly they reflected the spirit of the times when human lives were held in less regard than they are today. There is a window in the Barnston Chancel at Farndon to the memory of William Barnston who died, aged 40 years, in 1872. When his brother, Roger, died in 1857 after being severely wounded at the relief of Lucknow, a premium was offered for the best design for a memorial to him to be raised by public subscription. From those sent in a design by Mr. Ed. A. Heffer was selected and the monument was placed in an elevated situation between Farndon and Churton where it still stands.

It was built from stone from the Cefn quarries, with iron railings between the lions quadrant, in plan. The dimensions are: Greatest diameter, 23 ft.; length of needle, 40 ft.; width at top, 2 ft. 3 ins.; at bottom next pedestal, 3 ft. 9 ins. The width of the base for pedestal is 9 ft. The lions are 6 ft. long, and the total height of the memorial from the ground is 55 ft. The cost was £400.

The inscription of the memorial reads:

Erected in memory of
Roger Barnston, Esq.,
of Crewe Hill, Major and Brevet Lieut. Colonel
of Her Majesty's 90th Light Infantry
and Knight of the Legion of Honour and of the Order of the
Mehjide

by his tenants and friends.

He served in the Crimean War from December 1834
and was present at the siege and fall of Sebastopol
and also in the Indian Mutiny Campaign in 1857
in which he received a severe wound whilst
gallantly leading an assault at the relief of Lucknow on
the 16th November 1857 from the effects of which he died at
Cawnpore on the 23rd December 1857
Aged 31 years
and was interred in the Military Cemetery at that place.

There is a monument to Roger Barnston in the Barnston Chancel in Farndon church, and an inscribed stone on his grave in the Mirpore cemetery at Cawnpore where he died. The stone was restored by officers while stationed at Cawnpore in India in 1882.

Much of the information for this chapter comes from the note book about the family which was written in the autumn of 1917 by Charlotte Barnston⁽¹³⁾ who was one of the daughters of William and Mary Barnston. But it was her brother, Harry Barnston⁽¹⁴⁾, who

became Lord of the Manor on his 21st birthday in 1891 as a present from his Mother. Prior to this date the family had been tenants of the then Lord, The Bishop of Lichfield.

Harry Barnston, was born at Edinburgh, and after being educated at private schools, matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, which he left with the degree of M.A., being subsequently called to the Bar, at the Inner Temple in 1897. For 12 years he served in the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry Cavalry, and was Chairman of the Tarvin Board of Guardians. Between 1910 and 1929 he was Conservative Member of Parliament for the Eddisbury Division of Cheshire and, even today, older inhabitants remember elections and how they were taught in school to chant:

'Vote, Vote, Vote, for Harry Barnston

Who's that knocking at the door?

It's the Kaiser and his wife

And we'll kill them with a knife

And there wont be any Kaiser any more'.

By 1928 he had become Maj. Sir Harry Barnston, Bart, M.A., M.P., D.L., J.P., and was Lord of the Manor for Farndon, Churton and Crewe. He never married but lived with his mother at *Crewe Hill* in Crewe which boasted an area of 92 acres—of which 11 were water—and a population of 56.

With his death so ended the male line of the Barnston family and the property passed to his sister, Joanna Barnston.

On her death in 1946 the estate passed to her great-nephew, Major Philip Trevor⁽¹⁵⁾, who changed his name by Deed Poll to Maj. Philip Trevor-Barnston. In addition to a number of houses, he is presently the owner of about 2,000 acres in Trafford, Hapsford, and Farndon parish, and (in 1980) lives with his wife, Mrs. Olwen Trevor-Barnston, at *Crewe Hill*.

CREWE HILL

After leaving Wirral the Barnstons appear to have resided in Churton by Farndon for several centuries. The family home, *Churton Hall*, bears the date 1569 and this is described elsewhere. By the end of the eighteenth century they had a town house, known as *Forest House*, in Forest Road, Chester, which is now the site of a restaurant.

The move to *Crewe Hill* was made some time early in the nineteenth century. It had formerly been used as a summer house.

The date of the building of *Crewe Hill* is unknown but it is recorded that the dining room and the rooms above it were added in 1832; the year in which William Barnston was born. Several rooms contain family portraits and other objects of interest.

Above the hall door, in stained glass, is the Gartside crest—a Greyhound (could this have any connection with the Farndon rhyme already mentioned?)—and also a Griffon—sometimes supposed (incorrectly) to be the crest of the Trafford family. The oak rails

across the gallery were originally the Communion rails in a Chester church which was pulled down in the course of road widening. This may have been St. Bridget's church which was demolished in 1826 by an Act of Parliament in order that the new road, known as Grosvenor Street (which was to connect with the new Grosvenor Bridge), could be constructed. Also in the hall are six head pieces worn by the Royal Dragoon Guards at Waterloo, and four from the time of Charles I. Additionally, there are two native clubs similar to the knobkerrie still in use among the South African natives. One of these has six notches on the handle indicating the number of men killed. The oak chairs date mainly from the seventeenth century. The piece of elephant's tusk and the sword with the inlaid handle were brought from India by Col. King K. H. who 'particularly signalled himself during the investment and siege of the celebrated fortress of Bhurtpore on which occasion, with the help of a Capt. Lenard and two orderlies, he captured a native Rajah with his whole suite'. Col. King saw service there between 1823 and 1825.

The colours in the hall were the original ones of the Royal Cheshire Militia, while those on each side of the dining room door were brought from Spain by Sir George de Lacy Evans (1787-1870). His exploits are described on page 56 of *Letters of Queen Victoria*.

In the study is a curious chest, dated about 1550. This is similar to one in the museum at Hastings. It was formerly used as a safe and has nine locks.

In the drawing room are relics of the Crimean War (1854-5) which include the medals of both William and Roger Barnston. There is also the gold watch which William Barnston wore at the Battle of Inkermann and referred to in a letter home from Scutari Hospital on November 24th, 1854.

'I was put on a stretcher, and carried to the doctor, who examined me and said "Well, you have had a fortunate escape, your watch has saved you". But in his hurry he made a mistake. If it had not been for my watch the ball would have come out where it struck the watch and the wound would have been nothing at all. As it is, however, the watch turned the ball in again and made the wound some four or five inches larger than it would have been'.

His drinking and washing utensils are there, and also a short heavy Russian sword which he took from a dead soldier.

In the book room is a volume of John Speed's maps.

Outside a red sandstone arch was erected by Roger Harry Barnston in memory of a favourite dog, 'Jasper'. The Dog's Tomb was also put up by him to a setter called 'Bob'.

The Village Pumps at Farndon and Crewe were installed by William and Mary Barnston. That at Farndon was erected by William in the 1850s, and the one at Crewe by Mary about 1877.

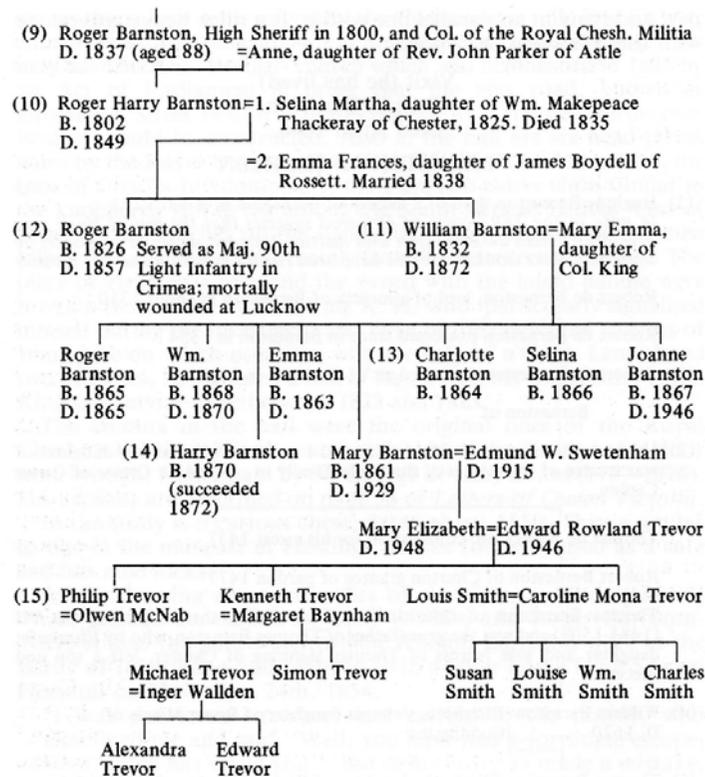
In the winter of 1922-3 a portion of the flooring of Farndon church was taken up due to dry rot. Underneath, close to the family

pew and lying in a parallel line with it, is a thick heavy gravestone with the following inscription:

Vixit (he has lived)
Thomas Barnston
Died April 1646.

BARNSTON OF CHURTON

- (1) Hugh de Berneston, lord of a moiety of Berneston in about 1293
(a note in the 1892 copy of Ormerod suggests that the son of Hugh may have been James de Berneston who married Margery, daughter of Robert de Vernon. Robert would therefore have been Hugh's grandson and not his son)
- Robert de Berneston, lord of a moiety of Berneston in about 1310
- Robert de Berneston possessed lands in Berneston in 1354
- (2) Robert de Berneston described as 'of Churton' in 1380
- Berneston of
- (3) Urian de Berneston of Chyrton in 1434 and 1449=Katherine, daughter of Ed de Crewe of Crewe Carden
was trustee of the estates of the Leche family in
- Thomas de Berneston, commission for his arrest 1437
- Robert Berneston of Churton grantee of pardon 1477
- Thomas Berneston of Churton was living during the reign of Henry VII (1485-1509) and was the grandfather of Thomas Barnston, who by Elizabeth, daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Manning of Chester, left a son and successor
- (4) William Barnston=Elizabeth, younger daughter of Roger Massie of D. 1620 Coddington
- (5) Thomas Barnston=Elizabeth, daughter of Richard Taylor of Hardwick in D. 1646 Shropshire
- (6) William Barnston=1618=Dorothy, daughter of Thomas Brooke and sister of Sir Richard Brooke of Norton
- (7) John Barnston=Alice, sole heiress of Thomas Trafford of Bridge Trafford B. 1630 who was killed at Naseby D. 1661
- Trafford Barnston=Anne, only daughter of Roger Massie of Coddington
- Roger Barnston=Jane (1st wife), sole heiress of Edward Gregge of Hapsford B. 1683
- (8) Robert Barnston=Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Whitmore Acton, Bart., of Aldenham and Round Acton in Shropshire



THE HOUSES

Farnon has grown as a village because it commands an important crossing to Wales and not because it is in close proximity to Chester or towns such as Nantwich. It is perhaps for this reason that it was overlooked by the prosperous merchants who built their stately homes near the villages of Cheshire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and, today, there are still only a few large

houses in the parish. Nevertheless it contains a number of interesting properties and not a few of these are of architectural merit. Regrettably, the notes which follow describe only a selection.

CHURTON

The ancient home of the Barnston family was at *Churton Hall* which today is a farm and (since 1945) the home of the Crump family. The 1882 edition of Ormerod described it as an 'ancient timber mansion, environed with stately trees, and though long abandoned to farmers, retaining much of its former respectable appearance'. Formerly there was a date, 1569, over the door, but during the period from 1978 to 1980 the house was restored by the architect Mr. Peter Rowlandson and only the two coats of arms now remain. There is, however, a Royal Exchange Fire Mark. New timbers have been used for the renovation but some of the original beams can still be seen, particularly around the porch. The early period of this Grade II building is indicated by the close studding with middle rail and decorative panel treatment and the entrance porch with studded door is particularly good. The pitch of the roof may indicate that it was originally thatched. The Bellis and Parker families were earlier occupiers. Although sceptical, Mrs. Crump claims the house had the reputation of being haunted and the ghost of a 'White Lady' was seen on one occasion. There are wells both inside and out and in front of the house stands the village pump after which the lane is named. This is no longer in working order.

At the top of *Pump Lane*, and opposite the Public House, in 1900 the steps of an ancient *Cross* marking the boundaries of the manors of Aldford and Farnon could still be seen. Mr. Owen described it as an 'octagonal stepping stone to a stile by the roadside about 100 yards from the first building on the left* hand side going towards Chester and on the pathway'. There is no trace of this today.

Also opposite the end of *Pump Lane* stands the single storey timber framed cottage (Grade II) which was once the old *Red Lion*. This has rather symmetrical panels which indicate that it is of early seventeenth century origin. Its thatched roof was destroyed by fire within the last 50 years. Today it is the home of Mrs. G. Mitchell.

The north gable of *Cherry Tree Cottage* encloses a primitive 'A' frame Cruck which was an early form of roof truss which transmitted the roof load down to the ground. In Cheshire there are Crucks from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. This house is dated 1650 and is the home of Mr. and Mrs. Huckerby. The present building is the result of the modernisation and reconstruction of three cottages into one house and until 1978 this was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. R. Lewis.

Of the three original cottages that where the 'A' frame Cruck shows was most certainly the oldest. Formerly it was known as

Keepers Cottage since the occupiers bore the rather grand title of 'Keeper of the Common Land'. It was sited to provide a clear view over the northern end of *King's Marsh*.

Mr. and Mrs. John Douglas lived at *Highway Farm* which previously was farmed by Mr. and Mrs. A. Lowe. There is a preservation order on the old barns in the yard which run parallel to the road.

Also in the village are the terraced houses known as *Rowley Place* which were built in 1898, and the much older *Church Farm* which bears the date 1682 and the initials of the builder, R.B. This is now occupied by the Pickering family and is an old brick building with sandstone edges. The outbuildings are dated 1864.

The cottage where Miss Lewis lives dates back to 1666 but was extended to make a larger house in 1891. This also bears a Royal Insurance Fire Mark. It lies on the lane leading to *Almere Ferry* which was in existence until about the time of the First World War when Mr. Neddy Williams was the boatman. A flat bottomed boat was used which was punted across the river with a pole. Would-be passengers often had to shout across the river for the services of the boatman, but there was no charge and, although cattle were not carried, it was much used by local people.

Sibbersfield or Sybbottsfield is mentioned in records of Farndon as long ago as 1300; probably meaning the 'fields of Sibota'. But although the name is ancient the present *Sibbersfield Hall* was only built in 1875 for the Parker family of Farndon and in the early 1900s it was occupied by the Holts of shipping fame. The buildings adjacent to the Hall include *Sibbersfield House* (Mr. and Mrs. Parsons), a farm, cottages and stables which all date back to the early nineteenth century. The 30 acres surrounding the Hall have produced some well-known racehorses, the most famous being 'Our Mary Ann' which won the Chester Cup in 1870 and to commemorate the event a gilded model of the horse was mounted on top of the clock tower. Today Mrs. S. Hancock lives at the Hall, and the Brassey family occupy the farm.

FARNDON

Moving away from the Churton area and into the village of Farndon the traveller will find what has been described as a 'pleasant intermixing of buildings of various styles and periods'.

Unfortunately some properties that were old in Mr. Owen's day have now disappeared. In his diary he mentions 'a very old cottage which stood at the top of Twitchhooks on the left hand side and which was apparently of the same period as an old one which was behind the church and was black and white. This was dated 1576 but was burnt down in 1883 having been occupied by a well known character called old Billy Gronnow, who died in 1886'. Less than 100 yards from the above and at the bottom of Twitchhooks on the left hand side stood an even older cottage which, says Mr. Owen,

'was sold in 1792 for £20'. This was pulled down in 1888 and may have been dated between 1558 and 1603 since a key of that period was found in one of the locks. An oil painting of this cottage by a Mr. Wright of Farndon was sold for £50 about 1900. Where is it now?

The diary goes on to mention 'an old house stood next to Mrs. Burmans' and was pulled down about 1882 by the owner, Mr. Clarke. It was last occupied by a family named Capper. Another old cottage of immense age stood immediately opposite the church gate. Old Jim Ackerly and his wife were the last occupants. It too was pulled down (no date)'.

In 1897 the diary records that the Grosvenors once owned much land and many houses in Farndon. The last piece of land, however, was sold by them in this year and the only property remaining was the Rectory; regarding which there were 20 entries in the Eaton Hall archives.

Fortunately, in Farndon village there are still many interesting buildings both old and new, large and small.

Down by the river stands one of the largest houses in the village. This is known as *Dee Banks* and is owned by Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Noble although much of their time is spent in Northern Ireland.

An interesting property built against the sandstone is the *Boat House*. The nearby cottage (now part of the *Boat House*) was occupied in 1870 by George Scott. The Rev. Owen's first entry at the back of the Burial Register in the summer of 1878 concerns this man whom he had buried on 8th August aged 74. 'He was a dyer by trade and came from Manchester. He lived in the little old cottage by the river'. The *Boat House* stands almost on the river bank and occasionally has to be evacuated when the Dee is in flood. It was from here that rowing boats used to be hired out, and attached to it is a *Tea Room* which still does good business in the summer time.

The two groups of timber framed buildings (Grade II) in the village, namely *Black and White Cottages* and *Tudor*, and *The Chimes*, reflect the decline in the standard of Carpentry building which can be associated with the post Civil War period of the seventeenth century. At this time oak was becoming scarce and expensive and the demand for buildings resulted in a great deal of second hand and beetle infested oak being reused for new construction. The result of this can be seen in the partial replacement of timber with brickwork which can be seen in many buildings of this period. As timber became scarce the close studded facades with decorative panel treatment, which was a feature of sixteenth century building, gave way to small framing with angle braces, these were stable as long as all timbers were considered vital to the construction, but the cutting away of members, to facilitate the fixing of larger windows during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was often disastrous both to the appearance and stability of such buildings.

The size of the brick infilled panels in both these groups of dwellings is unusually large for Cheshire; these panels would originally have been filled with wattle and daub. The long angle brace (or passing brace) to be seen in *Chimes* group is a feature of Shropshire and South Cheshire buildings. The dormer windows in the thatched roofs of *Black and White Cottages* are alterations; any original dormers would have had small pitched gable roofs.

There used to be four *Black and White Cottages* until about 1937 when the number was reduced to three. One of these has been occupied by members of the Simon family for 100 years. Mr. Tom Simon's father was born here in 1881 and his sister, Mrs. Betty Penk, still lives in the house. The other two are presently occupied by Mrs. M. E. Bird and Mr. E. Edwards.

Tudor House is the home of Mr. and Mrs. K. R. Boyd, while Mr. M. D. White, who runs an electrical business in Holt, lives at *The Chimes* with his wife.

Examples of Grade II seventeenth century brick buildings are *Top Farm House* and *Chapel House*.

Dutch gables are not common in Cheshire although other examples can be seen at Stretton Old Hall and Stretton Lower Hall. Carved inglenook beams are not unknown, but the form of moulding to the beam in *Top Farm* is surely unusual.

In *Chapel House* the chamfered oak beams which are typical of the period can be seen and the oak cupboard doors with 'H' hinges also appear to be original. This is the house where jockeys are said to have lodged for Farndon races. It is said in the village that when the chapel was being built and the old houses adjoining were being altered cupboards were found built into the walls for hanging tack.

The other house in the village which has pure seventeenth century features, such as the gable coping and a stone dressed facade, is *Holly Bank*, which was the doctors house for many years. The high listing of the building (Grade II) results from the Stuart period staircase, with spiral turned balusters, and the good panel doors hung on 'H' hinges. Until recently the whole building was overgrown with ivy. The house at present is the home of Mr. and Mrs. G. Tilston. Mr. Tilston is an auctioneer in Chester.

To the west of the road leading to Churton were formerly three thatched cottages but one of these was demolished some years ago for road widening. The remaining cottages are probably eighteenth century but are difficult to date due to roughcast surface treatment and the cast iron casements, which are a nineteenth century feature. These are listed as Grade III as are those on the opposite corner to the east of the Churton Road.

In the *Chemists Shop* (Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Booth) it is interesting to note that the bays are in the form of Ovalo moulds on plan and this is also the mould used for the stone eaves cornice. Flemish Bond is synonymous with eighteenth century construction. The sash windows are in the correct position for a late eighteenth

century building but either the glazing bars have been removed or the windows replaced in the nineteenth century.

Academy House is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. David Griffiths. It is a typical plain eighteenth century building in Flemish Bond with stove heads and sills, rusticated quoins, gable copings and near flush sash windows with glazing bars.

Later buildings of some merit include the *Lock Up* dated 1837. This is completely Georgian in appearance with its Flemish Bond brickwork and Tonne slate roof. Its appearance is only marred by the clay hip tiles. Presumably it was once used as a prison of some kind or as a pound for stray animals.

The whitening of the brickwork of the three cottages known as *The Cedars* (Mr. H. Thornber), *St. Melyd* (Mrs. H. M. Quarmby) and *dive Cottage* (Dr. F. S. Rickards) makes it difficult to be sure of the size and bonding of the bricks but they appear to be in English Garden Wall Bond. The Ogee projecting feature over the windows was first used in fourteenth century Church architecture and is known as a label course, its function being to throw rainwater clear of the windows. It is a very attractive feature which does much to enhance the appearance of nineteenth century cottages.

CREWE BY FARNDON

Toll Bar House stands on the Barton Road and was formerly used for the purpose which its name implies. Its appearance, however, has been changed considerably with recent extensive renovations. It is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. D. Rostron.

Other houses in this township include *Marsh House* (Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Dutton), *Kingslee* (Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Lewis), and *Crewe Hall* (Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Williamson).

Kingslee belonged to the Barbours of Bolesworth and was used as a dower house. It is dated 1820 and the outbuildings 1824. Today it is a farm.

Crewe Hall is also a farm and on the lead guttering at the back of the house is shown the date, 1815. In 1900 it was the home of the Salmons, later the Shaws, and the Applebys lived at the house until 10 years ago. In spite of the date on the building it has been added to on several occasions. Water for the farm is supplied from a 90 ft. artesian well in the rear yard. Across the fields can be seen the rectangular foundation marking of earlier buildings. Perhaps this is where the original Hall stood which is mentioned in the will of Thomas Stringer dated 16th September 1613.

BARTON

The township of Barton is little more than a hamlet sited on the hill to the east of Farndon. It is dominated by the *Cock Inn* which has been described elsewhere but there are two other Grade II buildings which certainly merit attention and it is pleasing also to note that the village stocks have been restored on the original site.

The gable of the seventeenth century timber framed building, known as *Mill Hey Cottages* has a rare form of framing. The panels formed by the timbers are very small and this arrangement is known as 'Close Panelling' as distinct from the 'Small Framing' which can be seen at the Cock Inn.

Rose Farm is a seventeenth century cottage in small framing with angle braces. An example of the earlier form of opening casement hung to metal hooks can be seen at first floor level. The roof of this building has had the original thatch replaced by slates.

County Councillor Jim Humphreys lives with his family at the much-restored *Barton Farm*. This is an apparently eighteenth century property in Flemish Bond with stone gable copings but an indication of the true age of the building is given by the small timber framed building on the west side of the farmhouse. Oak timbers are to be found in the main building and there is a very interesting window at first floor level, in the original wall, which has a moulded apron below it. The house was thatched until about 1900 and cheese was made here until just before the last war. Mrs. Humphrey's maiden name was Blake, and the house has been in the occupancy of the Blakes for 300 years. The family believes that parts of the building date back to the sixteenth century.

Although it is entirely irrelevant to a chapter on houses let it be recorded that the villagers are quite adamant about the truth of the tale of the egg. Many years ago a certain Mr. Francis of Barton had a hen which laid an egg at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. This in itself was not remarkable except that on this egg were the markings of a clock face and, as would be expected, the exact time of the laying was clearly indicated.

NATURAL HISTORY

Sadly, no Gilbert White ever lived in this parish, and even Parson Owen, who related how his heart was gladdened each April by the magnificent show of damson blossom, filled the pages of his diary mainly with jottings about his beloved church and those who worshipped in it. Until now no one has attempted to write of the flora and fauna of the village.

In ancient times practically the whole of Cheshire was covered by a dense oak forest that had colonised the clay drift deposited by the melting glaciers of the Ice Age. Over the centuries, however, these forests were cleared, the land was drained, and the patchwork of today's neat fields testifies to the labours of past generations. The network of hedgerows, containing mile upon mile of hawthorn, blackthorn, elder and bramble entwined with hop and honeysuckle, with banks and ditches gay in their season with celandine,

dandelion, cow parsley, campion, foxglove and willow herb, is the work of their hands. These remain a sanctuary for bird, beast, plant, and insect life, and long may they do so.

The narrow belt of low lying land that today stretches from *Lea Farm*, Aldford, in the north, to Crewe in the south, was once a great marsh where fed flocks of wild ducks and geese. Here can be found the greatest concentration of marl pits, deep drainage ditches, and the Plowley Brook. The whole stretch is traversed by country lanes and bridle paths and here, where Roman soldiers and medieval merchants once trod, it is possible to wander for hours and meet ne'er a soul. Though the land is now drained and under cultivation a goodly number of the field names proclaim its former state. Margaret's Marsh, Withe Marsh, Big Breeze Marsh, Great Taw Marsh, Big King's Marsh and Little Ten Pound Marsh are but a few. The name Big Breeze Marsh, medieval in origin, means Gadfly Marsh. The insect of that name frequents woods in the neighbourhood of water and the female sucks the blood of horses and cattle inflicting painful bites. Cowmen in the district may still be heard to say that a restless animal has 'got the briz on it'. The name Yildermor, first noted in 1307, means 'elder tree marsh'.

Along Aldford Brook the meadows in the Churton area frequently lie flooded in winter and there wild ducks and geese still gather in great numbers. In 1974 thirty Bewick's Swans remained for two days, and one afternoon in March 1980, Canada Geese, a single Greylag, Teal, Mallard, Wigeon, Shelduck, Pochard, and Pintail formed an immense congregation of wildfowl which also included a flock of Peewits and a solitary Curlew. Later that year, in November, just over 300 Canada Geese accompanied by six grey geese were feeding on the grassland. On most days a lone Heron flaps its leisurely way to or from its favourite pit, for close by at Eaton Park there is a heronry. T. H. Bell states that in 1874 there were 30 nests there which increased to 78 in 1907. In the peak year of 1937 eighty-six nests were recorded. T. A. Coward notes that pellets of a bird picked up at the Eaton Heronry were composed mainly of the fur and bones of Water Voles. A rare plant, the Great Burdock (*Arctium lappa*), has colonised the banks of Aldford Brook.

The marl pits of this area are numerous enough to be considered a special habitat. Many contain such fish as Rudd and Perch which thrive and multiply in small ponds. Crucian Carp and Tench have been introduced by local anglers but these fish would seem to need larger waters in which to breed successfully. According to local legend there were Eels in the area 'as thick as your arm'. Since 1975 plundering by Cormorants has been observed during open winters. T. A. Coward records the killing of one at Farndon in 1903, and in recent years, a Cormorant was found frozen in the ice at Churton. Keen botanists will find the pits a happy hunting ground. In late summer the chocolate-brown heads of the Bulrush

(or Reedmace) (*Typhus latifolia*) command instant attention; no rush-bearing festival would be complete without at least one specimen. Yellow Iris, Forget-me-not, Water Dropwort, Bogbean, Bur-reed, Gipsy-wort, Willow-herbs, Bur Marigold, Sedges, Rushes, Water Plantain, Brooklime, and Spearwort form a dense jungle at their edges. Moorhens and Coots build along the flags and rushes and Sedge Warblers and Reed Buntings nest in the dense herbage. Sixty years ago Coots were a rare sight and were confined to the riverside and meres. At that time all moorhens were called 'coots'; the true species was known as 'the bald-headed coot'.

In the early years of the century children could be certain of filling their jam jars in the springtime with tadpoles and the orange-bellied Crested Newts (or 'askers' as they were known). Today it takes long and careful searching to find just one small patch of frog spawn. After the first mild days in March there would be unmistakable signs that a vast amphibian army was gathering at the spawning grounds. Low-lying roads in the area would be carpeted with squashed corpses of frogs, toads and newts that had perished on this perilous journey. Nowadays but few are seen.

The number of eels in the pits fell during the same period. The young elvers still come up the Dee each spring in their millions—a never-ending black wriggling ribbon close to the bank. They were seen by a local lady angler in 1980. From the river they find their way up brooks and ditches but to reach the pits the final stretch of their thousand-mile journey must be across the fields.

Perhaps the decline in numbers of both frogs and eels can be accounted for by the increase in the use of chemical fertilisers; especially just after the Second World War. However, in 1979 and 1980 frogs appeared to be more plentiful and the eels seemed to be returning. In olden times elderly labourers with their home-made eel poles enjoyed many a warm summer evening fishing for 'snigs' whilst the aroma from their lovingly-sliced black twist deterred the midges. A supper of stewed eels and mushrooms would mark the end of a perfect day. It seems unlikely that those days will ever return.

In May the brilliant Yellow Wagtails that like to nest in rough pasture but are never far from water can be seen around the marl pits. Here too can be seen Snipe; especially in the winter 'time. Canada Geese may be in residence for, as their numbers have increased dramatically, they have taken to nesting in these small waters. In high summer where there are Sallow Willows (*Salix caprea*) it is worth searching for the fearsome-looking caterpillars of the Puss Moth among the foliage.

Another area worth investigating is the strip of meadow land along the Dee from Radley Wood at Aldford upstream as far as Crewe Hill. The Domesday Book records that the salmon fishing at Eaton gave employment to six persons and yielded 1,000 salmon annually. T. A. Coward (1910) describes the Dee as 'a salmon river

of some importance, resorted to by large numbers of coarse-fish anglers for the sake of the Bream and Roach which abound in its waters'. He continues, 'the river is normally tidal as high as the weir at Chester but at Springtides the water rises above the barrier and the tide reaches Farndon, where the Flounder is occasionally caught'. Today it is the Dace which abounds though the Roach and Bream survive still. Pike grow to a goodly size. One caught at the Maiden's Arbour, about 1945, weighed 18 lbs., and was accorded the honour of a glass case in which it graced the headmaster's room at the old Farndon School; the particular headmaster was renowned for catching tiddlers. Perch, Chub, Gudgeon, Ruffe, Minnows, Eels and Fluke complete the list of coarse fish in the area.

An unusual 'fish' was the Lamprey. These eel-like creatures had sucking mouths and fed on the flesh of other fish to which they attached themselves. A favourite pastime was to stand on the bridge to watch the Lampreys clinging to stones near the arches waiting for suitable hosts—preferably salmon. Coward states, 'at Farndon on the Dee wooden tongs, locally known as lamprey tongs, were formerly used to drag the fish from the stones to which they attached themselves'. The Lampreys were seen here as late as 1965.

In the early 1920s school children paddled along the sandy banks near the bridge searching for young eels and Lampreys. The first were dubbed 'stocking-needles' and the second 'blood-suckers'. Eventually a few bold spirits would retire to the undergrowth to sample cigarettes made from Mugwort leaves wrapped in brown paper. The river banks are clothed in Willows and Alder, and are gay in summer with Tansy, Mustard, Woody Nightshade, Fig wort, Himalayan Balsam, Mimulus, Ragwort, Purple Loosestrife, Poppy and Meadow Sweet.

Near the bridge and at Churton a rare newcomer is established, Broad-leaved Ragwort (*Senecio sarracenicus*), and at Crewe Hill near the river bank a colony of Teasels flourishes. Nearby the occasional Sand Martin nests and sometimes Kingfishers flash low over the water. In lonely spots Sandpipers can be disturbed and, out of their breeding season, parties of Siskins visit the alders. A Great Crested Grebe was a surprising visitor to the Dee near the Bridge in March 1979, having strayed from its usual habitat on one of the Cheshire meres.

The Water Vole is now seldom seen and the Otter disappeared some years ago. R. Newstead wrote in 1894 that the otter was 'common on the banks of the Dee and most common at Eaton and Farndon'. It was one moonlight night in the summer of 1950 or thereabouts that an otter making for a convenient sandbank surfaced a yard away from the bank to find itself face to face with a Churton angler fishing patiently for eels. For a second the two fishermen faced each other without movement. Then with a

disdainful sniff the otter dived and vanished. Was this the last to be seen in the parish?

Due to droughts, floods, drainage, fertilisers, tree felling and housebuilding the natural history of the parish is constantly changing. Each year brings its surprises and disappointments. Due to drainage of the meadows The Lady's Smock is not so abundant and neither is the Orange Tip Butterfly of which it is the food plant. Marsh Marigold, Early Purple Orchid and Wild Garlic (that used to taint the cow's milk), all find conditions less to their liking. The stretch of hedgerow where in 1948 three Cuckoo's eggs were found in three Hedge Sparrow's nests is now part of a Farndon estate. Many of the common garden birds are now on the increase yet the first really hard winter will drastically reduce the Wren population. It is the birds of prey, however, and many of the smaller migrants whose numbers have declined. Tawny Owls and Little Owls still call at dusk but the Barn Owl has almost disappeared although one was flushed from a hollow ash in Churton in 1980.

In his book *Birds of Cheshire* Hedley Bell records that an Eider Duck was shot at Aldford in 1895, a Scops Owl (the only one recorded in the County) was shot by a keeper at Carden Park in 1868, and a Rough-legged Buzzard was trapped near Aldford at the end of the nineteenth century. Common Buzzards still visit the Aldford area and two were picked up dead in one week near Churton in January 1975. The Greater Spotted Woodpecker maintains its numbers but the Green Woodpecker has almost vanished although one was reported in the Aldersey area two years ago. The Corncrake has not been seen for many years. Two confirmed sightings of unusual birds in 1978 were that of a pure white Swallow at Churton on 25th and 26th August and the rare White Stork over Barton Park on 18th June. The Fox flourishes and Badgers still visit their ancient sett on the Churton side of Sibbersfield Hall. This year (1980) one met its fate at the hands of a combine harvester. Moles, Rabbits, Field Mice, and Voles all abound.

In the village itself all the usual garden birds are plentiful, and the quality and quantity of bird life around the parish church is quite remarkable. Gardens planted with Buddleia and Sedum Spectabile will be well blessed with butterflies although their numbers fluctuate greatly from year to year. Nineteen forty seven was the year of the Clouded Yellow, and last year the Painted Lady made a come-back to the Buddleias in company with Cabbage White, Small White, Red Admiral, Comma, Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell. Only the Fritillaries appear to be absent.

In 1976 Dutch Elm disease destroyed the elms along the Hungry Hills, and 50 great elms perished along Lower Lane in Churton.

The sandstone walls in the village are colonised by Pellitory of the Wall, a plant much appreciated by earlier generations. A mild decoction made by bringing an ounce of fresh leaves gently to the

boil in a quart of water was held to be a sovereign remedy for kidney and bladder disorders. House Leeks used to be found on many old cottage roofs as a protection during thunderstorms and juice from their leaves was said to cure warts. This plant is also referred to by the strange name of 'Welcome home husband however drunk ye be'.

To conclude this chapter are accounts of two curious happenings. The first is related by a venerable villager, a great teller of tales, who worked for a time in the gardens at Eaton Hall before the First World War.

At 7.00 a.m. one morning whilst preparing to scythe the edges of the lawns which the machines had left uncut, a mallard drake came quacking across. From a nest at a fork in a tall tree the duck answered. The drake positioned itself underneath and one by one the ducklings dropped safely on to its back. With mother at the rear a proud father led the entire brood in single file down to the lake.

One evening in the summer of 1968 a farmer at Churton had been working with a combine harvester in a field of barley. When the time came to finish for the night he and his nephew unhooked the tractor and hitched it to a trailer. Before taking the trailer to load up with sacks of barley they threw a sheet loosely over the combine. On returning some 20 minutes later they stopped at the harvester to fasten the sheet. As they were bending over to secure the rear a loud humming sound filled the air. At first they thought that engines were being tested at Broughton Aircraft Factory but when they worked round to the front of the combine the source of the sound was revealed. On the ground in front was a great vibrating black mass of beetles five feet across—by next morning only 50 remained.

From the farmer's description they were almost certainly Dor Beetles (known locally as Great Humming Beetles). On warm evenings they may be seen flying low over fields where cattle are pastured. They settle on the cow pats for they and their larvae are devourers of dung.



The Bridge. An 18th century painting by Richard Wilson

ON FARNDON'S BRIDGE

Among the reeds beside the Dee
Where waters swirl and south wind sighs
Prince Medoc' heirs met brutal fate.
At witching time their cries still rise
From Farndon's bridge.

Pale ghosts of stealthy raiders stalk.
For cattle or for browsing sheep,
Returning at the peep of day,
Before the village wakens from sleep,
'Cross Farndon's bridge.

With feathered plume and boastful drum,
Proud Cavalier faced Roundhead dour.
Their spirits mourn the cause they lost,
And strive anew at midnight's hour
On Farndon's bridge.

Within Saint Chad's on rugged bluff,
Quaint leaded light depicts again,
Tent, musketeers, breastplate or pipe,
In greens and gold on painted pane,
By Farndon's bridge.

Our hideous traffic rumbles by
With ceaseless grind of gear and groan,
As monsters shake the very core,
And scar with steel the soft sandstone
Of Farndon's bridge.

Oh changing age, leave Farndon's shades
To walk as in their ancient day.
Let Cavalier or Medoc's sons
In peace pursue their long used way
O'er Farndon's bridge.

Margaret M. Nixon

HEARTH TAX ROLL 1664

<i>Chargeable</i>		<i>Not Chargeable</i>
John Rowland and		William Ellise
Richard Correy	vi	Margrett Barhous
Edward Milne	i	Ellin Savidge
Nathaniel Clubb	i	John Prolen (Probin?)
John Farr	i	George Rancroft
John Clubb	i	(Ravenscroft?)
John Yardley	iiii	William Spencer
John Johnson	i	Elizabeth Simson
Thomas Walker	i	John Prince
Thomas Huckley	i	John Minshall
Jone Reese	i	Katherina Richardson
Elnor Rogers	i	Henery Right
John Rogers	i	Thomas Stringer
Thomas Youd	i	Katherina Worshipp
John Jones	i	Rodger Dodd
Ann Williams	i	
William Fellow	i	(i each)
William Hulxley	i	
Thomas Jenkin	i	
John Ince	ii	
George Pate	i	
John Clubb	i	
William Clubb	iii	
John Pils	i	
John David	ii	
John Williams	i	
William Pallin	ii	
Thomas Farre	ii	
Richard Pulford	ii	
Elizabeth Farree (sic)	i	
John Milner	ii	
William Browerton	i	
Thomas Davis	i	
Robert Pallin	i	
Christian Radfield	i	
Rose Clubb	i	
Thomas Ince	i	
George Clubb	i	
Richard Yokkins	i	
William Smith	i	
William Sharpe	i	
John Fletcher	ii	
William Clubb	ii	
George Bradley	i	
Thomas Pulford	i	
William Crewe	iii	
Robert Perry	i	

(At this time each house was taxed according to the number of chimneys
thus some idea of the prosperity of the householder is indicated)

HOUSES AND THEIR OCCUPANTS—THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

<i>Name of House</i>	1850	1860	1864	1874
The Parsonage	Rev. J. Piccope	Rev. B. W. Johnstone	Rev. B. W. Johnstone	Rev. B. W. Johnstone
Deebank House	J. T. Simpson	J. T. Simpson	J. T. Simpson	Mrs. P. Simpson
Brewery House	R. Salmon	R. Salmon	R. Salmon	R. Salmon
Lime Cottage	Mrs. E. Leche		T. Shanklin	W. Hobson
Holly Bank		Insul Burman	Insul Burman	Insul Burman
Rose Villa		N. Wright		A. F. Newsome
Farndon Hall		H. Armstrong	H. Armstrong	H. & T. Armstrong
Post Office	C. Harrison	C. Harrison	C. Harrison	C. Harrison
Church Farm		R. Powdrell	R. Powdrell	R. Powdrell
Sibbersfield Hall		J. Parker	J. Parker	J. Parker
Oakbank Cottage			W. E. Phillips	
Dee Cottage		G. Scott	G. Scott	G. Scott
Farnhill (Boarding School)			R. Sergison	W. E. Phillips
Belmont House				W. Plumpton
Rose Cottage				T. Hodge
Churton Hall	J. Parker	J. Parker	J. Parker	J. Parker
The Hall (Clutton)			J. Lowe	J. Lowe

<i>Name of House</i>	1850	1860	1864	1874
Grange		W. Parker	W. Parker	W. Parker
Crewe Hall		W. Wootton	W. Wootton	W. Wootton
Crewe Hill		(unoccupied)	W. Barnston	Mrs. M. E. Barnston
King's Lee				G. Barbour
Poplar House				
Handley Villa				
Oak House				
Bridge View				
The Manse				
Marsh House				
Mount View				
Ivy Cottage				
Rowley Hill				
Laurel Bank				
Ferndale				
Riverbank				
Farndon House			Miss A. Nicholas	

<i>Name of House</i>	1890	1914	1928	1939
The Parsonage	Rev. L. E. Owen	Rev. C. E. Austin	Rev. S. P. Gray	Rev. G. B. Vaughan
Deebank House	Mrs. P. Simpson	Mrs. Gill		Misses L. & M. Stevenson
Brewery House		Miss Salmon	G. Lowe	
Lime Cottage	Miss E. Parker	S. B. Ducker		E. Penk
Holly Bank	Mrs. C. Burman	Dr. W. Parker	Dr. W. Parker	Dr. J. Alexander
Rose Villa	T. Jones	T. Jones		W. D. Bromfield
Farndon Hall	G. Parry	E. Davies	E. M. Parker-Jervis	Mrs. E. D. Parker-Jervis
Post Office		Miss E. A. Ince		R. Ince
Church Farm				
Sibbersfield Hall	J. P. Edwards	P. D. Holt-J.P.	P. D. Holt-J.P.	F. Bushby
Oakbank Cottage				
Dee Cottage		Mrs. E. Jones	J. Jones	J. Jones
Farnhill (Boarding School)				
Belmont House	W. Plumpton	G. Plumpton Harding	G. Plumpton Harding	G. Plumpton Harding
Rose Cottage				
Churton Hall	T. Parker Jnr.	Bellis Bros. Ltd.	Bellis Bros. Ltd.	Bellis Bros. Ltd.
The Hall (Clutton)				J. T. Lewis
Grange				

<i>Name of House</i>	1890	1914	1928	1939
Crewe Hall		W. Shaw		T. E. Appleby
Crewe Hill	Mrs. M. E. Barnston	Mrs. Barnston and H. Barnston	Major Sir H. Barnston	Miss Barnston
King's Lee	F. A. Wolryche-Whitmore	Cpt. Morgan Jones	J. C. Lewis	J. C. Lewis
Poplar House				
Handley Villa			S. B. Ducker	Mrs. A. Ducker
Oak House		Miss Grange	J. Lewis	P. Mottershead
Bridge View			N. S. Parker	Mrs. M. Parker
The Manse			T. Roycroft	
Marsh House	Mrs. E. Parker	Rev. L. M. Davies	Rev. G. Thomas	
Mount View	Mrs. A. Hale	N. S. Parker	J. D. Parker	J. D. Parker
Ivy Cottage		S. D. Powdrell		
Rowley Hill		H. Brereton	Cpt. Maples	Cpt. Maples
Laurel Bank	F. Bellis	P. Haswell	P. Haswell	
Ferndale				
Riverbank				H. E. Mottershead
Farndon House				W. Parker

INCUMBENTS OF FARNDON

Henry IV

Richard Rawlinson	
Edward Blaker	1541 C
Richard Madoke	1541 C
John Bostock	1541 C
Richard Williamson	1573-1596
Otes Bradleye	1601-1630
Richard Broughton	1630-1646 (Siege—Church occupied by Garrison 1643-45)
William Bridges	1648
Thomas Marler	1656-1685 or 90
Robert Williamson	1690
Roger Holt	1691-1713
John Fowler B.A.	1713-1738
Robert Massie M.A.	1738-1759
Richard Yates	1759-1769
Thomas Mostyn M.A.	1769-1775
Charles Mytton	1775-1801
Thomas Davies B.A.	1801-1831
Francis Bryans M.A.	1830-1833
Thomas Eaton B.A.	1833-1838
Thomas Francis Barker M.A.	1838-1843
John Piccope M.A.	1844-1852
R. W. Bagot	1852-1854
Bolton Waller Johnstone M.A.	1854-1878
Lewis Edward Owen B.A.	1878-1909
Charles Ed. Austin M.A.	1910-1921
Stephen Gray L.Th.	1922-1936
George Vaughan B.D.	1936-1953
J. Godfrey Lloyd M.A.	1954-1962
J. M. Corley M.A.	1962-1971
Marcus Hasted	1972-1979
John Heale	1979-1980
Eric Brierley F.R.S.A.	1980-

(Some of the Records have been kept badly and certain dates are in doubt)

THE WAR MEMORIAL

1914-1919

Herbert Davies
 Thomas W. Edge
 William Edge
 John Gauterin
 Albert Ince
 Henry L. Ince
 Joseph Jones
 Lewis Martyn
 Frank E. Moscate
 Godfrey F. Owen
 Arthur Parker
 Samuel Pugh
 John Shaw
 Joseph J. Stretton
 James Weaver
 Thomas Weaver
 Charles N. Williamson
 Reginald Thelwall

In perpetual memory of those men who died for their country.

1939-1945

Edward Carstairs Parker-Jervis
 Ernest Mark Cecil Maples
 John Youde
 Colin Douglas Loughlin

THE PARISH COUNCIL

May 1980 to May 1982

Mr. S. H. M. Lloyd (Chairman)
 Mr. R. Mason (Clerk)
 Mrs. B. E. Bridge
 Mr. J. T. L. Carline
 Mrs. W. Clubbe
 Mrs. M. A. M. Cordery
 Mr. F. Kirkham
 Mr. L. Lightfoot
 Mr. A. T. Stewart

Earlier Chairmen (1894 to 1981)

L. Gowey
 Harry Barnston
 G. J. P. Harding
 Joseph Salmon
 L. M. Davies
 S. B. Duckers
 Thomas Lowe
 Thomas Sergison
 E. M. Parker-Jervis
 R. L. Ince
 Edward Bellis
 R. Whittingham
 George Lowe
 George Vaughan
 M. Pardoe
 Hugh G. Lloyd
 C. Gauterin
 H. Lewis

G. Redrope
 Harry Hughes
 Edith Parker
 J. Bancroft
 D. White
 J. G. Lloyd
 F. R. Nuttall
 W. W. Booth
 S. H. M. Lloyd
 Mrs. M. A. M. Cordery

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 The Cheshire Sheaf
 Cheshire Life
 Deesider
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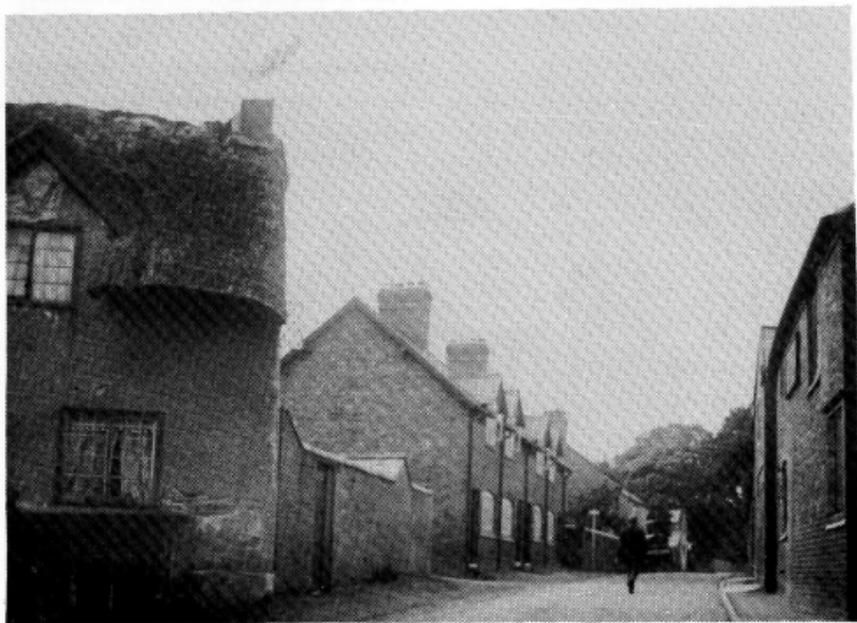
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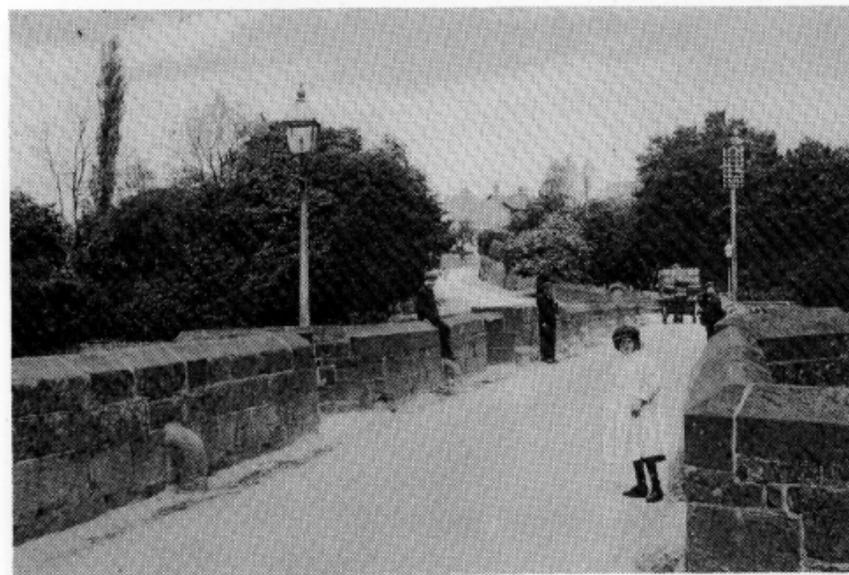
The Raven, Farndon



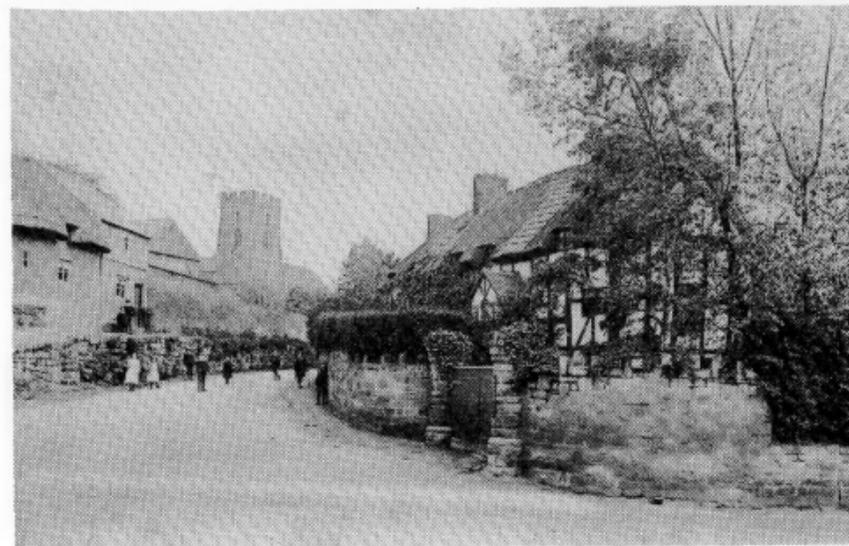
Farndon W.I. meeting, early 1950's



Churton Road, Farndon, early 20th Century



The Bridge, Farndon, 1909



Church Lane, Farndon, 1900



W. Harrison, Grocer's Shop, circa 1900



Barton Road, Farndon, 1907

