

1700s in Marston

Below are documents showing life in Marston in the 1700s.

Chief Monument in Church

The Chief monument in ye church ov Merston, near Oxon, is yt of Sr Rich. Croke, (son of Unton Croke) where he is characteris'd as being a man of Great Virtues, & belov'd by King Charles I and II, & by all good men, & was universally lamented at his death. Which is so false, that 'tis well known that for his Breach of ye Articles made to Penrudduck, after he had surrender'd himself up to him, upon the Defeat of his Enterprise in behalf of the king (then in Exile) at Salisbury, as that he should have his Life &c., he, the said Croke, was made a Serjeant by Oliver, and became so universally hated, for yr treacherous Action, & several other most notorious Instances of Knavery, that no one could give him, of his son Unton Croke, who was as bad, a good Worde; tho' 'tis acknowledged yt he was a very fair spoken man, & by his insinuating way of Behaviour got a large Estate, which however never prosper'd.

[CEDoble ed. Hearne's Collections i (1705-7) OHS (1884), 82

Dr Thomas Secker's Visitation 1738

1. Below is an account of a visit to Marston in 1738 by Dr Thomas Secker on behalf of The (church) Diocese of Oxford.
2. The extent of the parish is two miles, the number of houses forty-four, and no families of note in the place; nor any hamlets or villages belonging thereto.
3. There are no papists in the parish
4. There are no Presbyterians, Independents nor Anabaptists.
5. There are no Quakers.
6. There are no persons who profess to disregard religion, that I know of.
7. I constantly reside upon my cure, having taken a house near the church for that purpose {these words are struckout} The Reverend Mr Price of All Souls College in Oxford is my Curate and he serves no other Cure {These words are added in another handwriting}
8. Publick Service is duly performed twice every Lord's Day and one sermon preached: prayers are read in the church on Frydays and all Holy Days throughout the year {the words 'on Frydays' are struck out}. The children are catechis'd every Sunday in the afternoon during the Holy season of Lent. They have ye catechism explained to them. I know of no persons who frequent publick worship who have not been baptised. The

sacrament of the Lord's Supper is administered five times in ye year and usually thirty communicants present.

9.

There is no Free School, Hospital or Alms House in ye Parish.

10.

There is no Voluntary Charity School.

11.

No lands or Tenements that I know of have been given at any time to church or to poor.

12.

The money collected at the sacrament is dispos'd of by me to such of the poor who constantly attend Divine Service and receive the Holy Communion.

I know of no other matter relating to the Parish which it is proper to inform yr Lordship of, beside what these answers contain.

John Warner Curate {these words are crossed through}

John Coxe Vicar {these words are added in another handwriting}

John Coxe was instituted Vicar in 1758

[v. Thomas Berdmore 1735-8]

(Primary)(issued May 30: earliest surviving articles of Visitation for Diocese of Oxford). Trscr. & Ed. The Revd H. A. Lloyd Jukes ORS 38 (1957) pp 100-101

John Almond 1702

February 6th 1702: John Almond, son of George Almond of Marston, a baker, was is bound as an apprentice to his father, shall be admitted free for 40 shillings and official fees which is paid by the said George Almond and the said John Almond is sworn.

[Oxford Council Acts 1701-1752. M.G. Hobson OHS.NS.X (1954)]

Marston Murder Mystery from 1770

Below is an account of a murder, the trial and subsequent events that took place in Marston in 1770. The information is taken from the court records of the time. But who did it?...

OXFORD September 29 [1770]

On Monday last and inquisition was taken at Marston, about two miles from the city, before Mr. Johnson, His Majesty's Coroner for this county, on view of the Body of Elizabeth Cummins, a poor woman, aged upwards of sixty-five, who was found dead in her bed last Saturday Forenoon, with her throat cut in so dreadful a manner that her head was almost severed from her body.

It appeared, upon the examination of the witnesses, that the door of the cottage in which the poor woman lived alone, had been forced open by a hedge stake left near it; and a bloody

razor was found at a very small distance, which was known to belong to Mr. John Grove, a young farmer of the same place, who was recollected to have been seen out late the night before in his usual dress, and early next morning in other clothes; this circumstance, among others, together in his absence, induced the neighbours to call in the Peace Officer, and break open Mr Grove's house; in searching which the coat and shirt, both very bloody, in which the fact was supposed to have been committed, were discovered thrust into a very obscure hole between the lath and plastering of an upper room.

Mr Groves, who had been absent both Saturday and Sunday, returned to Marston on Monday morning, when he was immediately apprehended and brought before the inquest; and being asked what he had to allege in his own defence, he declared himself innocent, and said the razor was not his, for he sold it to a stranger:

Upon being asked the reason for hiding his clothes, he said he could not tell; and the cause he assigned for their bloody was, that he had scratched his finger, and his nose had bled; but there was no proof or appearance of either; and the jury returned their verdict, Wilful Murder, against the said John Groves; upon which he was committed to our Castle, by virtue of the Coroner's warrant, in order to take his trial at the next Assize.

The poor woman had long been supported by the Parish, and was much more decrepid and infirm than many women of her years; yet what is very extraordinary, it appeared that a rape had been committed; and it is supposed the murder might be intended to prevent a prosecution.

Saturday 2 March 1771 n.931

On Wednesday next the Commission will be opened here, for holding the ensuing Lent Assize; at which the following prisoners, now in our Castle, are to take their trials, viz: John Grove, charged with the murder of Elizabeth Cummings...

Saturday 8 March 1771

...John Grove acquitted.

27 July 1771 N. 952

We hear from Brize Norton, in this county, that on Monday last, to the amazement of many people, was married there, Mr John Grove, late of Marston, near this city, to Miss Elizabeth Wells, daughter of Mrs Wells, of Brize Norton aforesaid, baker. This is the same person who was tried and acquitted at our last Lent Assize for the murder of Elizabeth Cummings.

GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE: MR URBAN Dec 20 [vol 69, 1799 pt 2, pp 1097-8]

The Parish of MARSTON in Oxfordshire is Northwood from the city of Oxford, and the church is about a mile and a half from Magdalen Bridge. The church is a plain building consisting of a nave, two ailes, a chancel and a square tower. The annexed rude sketch (fig 3) is a North-West view; a Southern cannot be so well commandant, on account of a large walnut tree growing in front of the chancel. The following epitaphs are the only existing memorials of eminent persons contained in the church.... This living is a vicarage of but small value, not, as I am informed, more than 26l per annum, which the present worthy incumbent, the Rev Dr. Curtis

of Magdalen College, distributes mostly, if not wholly, among the poor of his little flock. The service of the church the Doctor performs every Sunday. His sermons are well attended; and his parishioners are as much edified by his good example as by his excellent discourses. Some of the young farmers have studied psalmody; and they attend the service very regularly. The instrumental part of the divine harmony consists of a bassoon and two clarinets.

A topographical description of the parish shall be sent soon.

GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE: Mr URBAN Feb 7 [vol 70, 1800 pt. 1, pp 105-108]

Marston contains about 1050 acres of land, and is bounded by the parishes of St Clements, Headington and Elsfield, on the south, south-east, and north, and by the River Cherwell on the west, and south-west.

The town, as it is called, of Marston consists of 43 dwelling-houses; the number of inhabitants are about 250. There is no house or habitation in any other part of the parish, except the hut of a solitary fisherman on the bank of the River Cherwell, where he resides for the purpose of attending his nets and his wheels.

No person above the rank of yeoman dwells in this parish at the present. The family of Croke inhabited the manor house before, during, and after the grand rebellion. Another branch of the family also dwelt here. The house of the latter is now an ale-house, distinguished by the sign of the White Hart, in the possession of Mr Joseph Bleay, and old and respectable inhabitant, who carries on the triple employments of a farmer, a baker and a publican.

The manor-house is a heavy stone building, erected without much attention to elegance or regularity. It is now inhabited by six families of paupers (*sic transit*). The present lord of the manor is Henry Whorwood, esq. There is a great quantity of excellent bacon cured here, which is disposed of at Oxford.

I cannot find that any of the Crokes now reside in this county. The family were devoted for several generations to the study of the law. There are, I believe, three books of reports, by three different authors of this name and family, collected in three different reigns. Some of your learned correspondents may be able to furnish the publick with memoirs of this antient but decayed family.

At the end of these hints I shall add a story related by Dr. Plot, in his Natural History of this county, wherein the learned Serjeant Unton Croke, whose epitaph I have notice, bore a conspicuous part. The inscription on his grave seems to confess his want of popularity. There are no remains of antiquity in this place except two stone crosses, one of which is in the church-yard, the other in the street, without either carving or inscription on either, and both mutilated.

The inhabitants of Marston may divided into three classes, viz, farmers or yeomen, labourers and paupers. There are but three or four mechanicks in the place; a blacksmith, a carpenter and a weaver.

Luxury has not yet extended to Marston, near as it is to the University and a populous city. The farmers are most of them persons possessed of considerable property, yet they live in the most frugal and plain manner. The names most general here are Sims, Bleay and Loder; and there are several families bearing each name.

The soil is generally a rich, dark-coloured argillaceous earth to the depth of three or four feet; underwhich a bed of gravel is discovered of considerable thickness. The air is damp on account of the low situation, and the neighbourhood of the slow River Cherwell; yet there are persons of both sexes here of very advanced ages.

The ague was formerly an almost universal distemper, but for the last 14 years it has hardly been known. Its successor is the rheumatism. There are females deaf and dumb, of whom two are sisters.

The poor are numerous and expensive, notwithstanding the attention and liberality of Dr Curtis, and the charity of some principle inhabitants. The Doctor also keeps several poor children at schools at his own expence.

Among the birds of prey I observed, *milvus* (.????....) the fork-tailed kite, or glead; the *milvus regalis*, the long-winged kite (or puttock); and the *accipiter merularius*, the sparrow-hawk. These find prey amongh the *columbae sylvestres*, of which I have observed great numbers of the two following species, viz, the *palumbus torquatus*, the ring-dove, or quiest, and the *columba cavernalis*, ?????, the stock-dove, or wood-pigeon. A pair of the latter built in a fir tree within a few yards of the window of my room, and would have bred there had not the nest been cruelly destroyed.

The land is very rich and yields good crops, and of all kinds of corn and pulse, especially beans. I cannot, however, compliment the farmers here, on the neatness of their husbandary. A considerable number of house lambs are raised here; the breed of sheep are chiefly the Berkshire kind.

The timber trees are the elm, ash, abel, sycamore, and (but very few) oak. The elms grow to a great size and height. Here is a great variety of good fruit, for which a market is found at Oxford.

Among rare spontaneous plants I discovered the *geranium columbinum maximum*, or great-jagged dove's foot crane's bill; the *viola palustris rotundifolia*, the round-leaved violet; and the *euphrasia*, or eye-bright.

In the fossil kingdom the *Ostracites* are found in vast numbers among the gravel. It has been observed that the deep or convex shell is only found. The burn into a lime exquisitely white, which effervesces violently with water. The smell and taste of the lime is very disagreeable. The *Belemnites*, called by the Germans *alphen-schos*, i.e. fairy-arrows; the Danes call them ghost-candles, finger-stones and thunder-bolt; these are found in the gravel in all their various shapes, of which I have numerous specimens.

The parish is well-watered; for besides the Cherwell, there are many springs, and a small brook which divides the parish and Elsfield parish, and runs into the Cherwell at Lescot. In this brook are jack, perch, chubb, dace, loaches, minnows and bullheads; and it abounds with large and fine cray-fish. The Cherwell is a considerable river and joins the Isis at Oxford; there is a fishery on it in the parish, where great numbers of pike, perch, chubb, roach, eels and grigs, are taken; both the later grow to a very large size. The grigs are a different species from the eels, and though they weigh four or five pounds, they are never called eels by the fishermen. There is a species of roach peculiar to this river; it is called finscale, and which is said to be very delicious meat. Here are also the smaller fish, such as gudgeon, bleak, minnow, &c. and great numbers of cray-fish, which are sold at Oxford for three shillings the hundred. Angling is permitted, and is a favourite diversion with the gentlemen of the University.

There are some peculiar expressions used by the natives of Marston, among which the word 'unked' is most frequently introduced in conversation. Everything that is unfortunate, or unluck, or not as it could be wished, is unked. The word may be derived from 'uncouth', and has, in many instances, the same meaning. When the roads are miry and dirty, it is said to be hoxey; and when they are clean and dry, it is 'quite path'.

The anecdote from Dr Plot is as follows:..."I hope this very imperfect topographical attempt will be followed by parochial descriptions worthy the attention of your readers, from the pens of your learned correspondents in every part of the Kingdom."

Yours &c.

J. Simmonds

House Sale Advert

8 June 1771 n. 945

To be Sold, together or in parcels – a LEASEHOLD ESTATE, situate at Marston, near Oxford, left to several tenants at the yearly rent of 116l. Part of the Estate is held under c.c.c. by lease for 20 years (of which three years are expired) and the other part thereof under Brazen-nose College, by lease for 21 years (of which 13 years are expired) each lease is renewable every seven years.

For particulars enquire Mr. Leake, Attorney-at-Law, in Witney, Oxfordshire; or of Mr Joseph Blay, at Marston who will shew the premises.