

1900s in Marston

Below are documents showing life in Marston in the 1900s.

Marston Quarterly Notes: CHRISTMAS, 1906

OUR PATRON SAINT: FATHER CHRISTMAS.

(The following is the conclusion of the article on St. Nicholas, which appeared in last issue 1906).

Another attribute of the saint is the protection he affords to sailors. The reason for this is that on one occasion, when he was making a voyage to the Holy Land and a tempest arose, his prayers assuaged it; while another time he is said to have appeared to and saved some mariners who implored his assistance. For this reason St. Nicholas is frequently seen with ships in the background.

In honour of St. Nicholas there are at the present, time close on, if not quite, four hundred churches dedicated to the saint in England, and there are few seaport towns throughout the world which have not one at least. The largest parish church in England is St. Nicholas at Yarmouth, which dates back to 1190, while another scarcely smaller is at Hull. In inland towns these St. Nicholas churches are rare, but when they do occur they are generally close to navigable rivers, and London boasts more than one. The most notable is probably St. Nicholas Cole Abbey, within a stone's throw of the Thames, and no one needs to have it pointed out that Cole is merely another way of writing Cola, which is a shortened form of Nicholas. St. Nicholas Cole Abbey is, therefore, nothing more than the Abbey Church of St. Nicholas, with the name written twice over.

After having lived a life of great piety and renown Nicholas died on December 6th, 326, and was buried with the most magnificent rites at Myra. There his relics were preserved until the end of the eleventh century, when certain merchants of Bari, on the Adriatic, went on an expedition to Lycia, broke open the coffin containing Nicholas's bones, and took them to Bari. The remains were placed in the Church of St. Stephen in that town, and eventually a magnificent church was built for the purpose of containing them. This was consecrated by Pope Nicholas II.

In the old days the Prior of St. Nicholas claimed to rank with the Archbishop of Milan, the Bishop of Loretto, and the Cardinal of Capua, and even took precedence of the King of Naples when His Majesty was in the precincts of the church, another suggestive proof of the fact that at this season of the year even Kings have to yield place to the Lord of the Season, whose vicegerents, the children, crowned with Love with the magic sceptre of Imagination in one hand and the orb of Innocence in the other, give to our earth an added glory and a joy which it somehow lacks at other times.

Lovers, young and old, of Santa Claus (says a writer in the Daily Chronicle) should not forget that to-day is the Eve of St. Nicholas. "The 25th day of December," says Henry Machyn in his "Diary" under 1556, "was Sant Necolas evyn, and Sant Necolas (i.e., the boy Bishop's

procession) whentt a-hrod in most partt in London syngyng after the old fassyon, and was reseyyvd with inony good pepulle in-to ther howses, and had myche good chere as ever they had, in many plasses." Naogeorgus, in his "Popish Kingdome" (1570), while denouncing the following custom, gives us unintentionally a pretty picture of the Santa Claus of the Elizabethan children :—

" Saint Nicholas money usde to give to maydeus secretlie, Who, that he still may use his wonted liberalitie, The mothers all their children on the Eve do cause to fast, and, when they every one at night in senselesse sleepe are cast, Both Apples, Nuttes, and Peares they bring and other things beside.

As caps and shooes, aud petticotes, which secretly they hide, And in the morning found, they say, that this St. Nicholas brought: Thus tender mindes to worship saints and wicked things are taught."

An interesting instance of a modern celebration of St. Nicholas day comes to us from a village in Essex—Berden. near Stansted— where a festival service of the children's Guild of St. Nicholas is held in church and a "mystery play" afterwards acted by the children. The vicar (the Rev. Hubert Kynaston Hudson) has kindly sent us the following account of the guild and festival:

"... The Guild of St. Nicholas is practically, an original idea of mine, as an attempt to improve on the ordinary parochial Band of Hope. The dedication to S. Nicholas suggested the idea of the Boy Bishop, a practice that Dean Colet strongly approved of. . . .

Each child in joining is a probationer till 7 years of age, on the following St Nicholas day they read out the Guild Vow in church and sign it later.

Breaking the Guild Vow means that you throw yourself out of the Guild, but I find the children have been very satisfactory. . . .

The Guild Vow you see is on the lines of the 10 Commandments. Each boy comes through in due course to be Boy Bishop, and each girl to be May Queen. I enclose you a portrait of ' the first Boy Bishop* since the Reformation '! You see the cope, mitre, and staff are the very plainest, but all the children have to know the meaning of the symbols which are explained each S. Nicholas day.

The "Mystery Play" is also of the very simplest, some verses I put together myself for the youngest children. My great idea was to put before them some definite ideas of courage, self sacrifice and trust in god ; using the legend as a means. If there is any demand for it I may publish it, otherwise, if you would like to adopt it next year I could copy it out for you. Bishop Testing spoke very kindly of the Guild."

I promise that as long as I am a Member of the Guild of St. Nicholas, (i) I will regularly say my prayers, and come to church. (2) I will be obedient, loving, temperate, honest, truthful and pure – Aelfric Hudson, 1901.

HISTORICAL JOTTINGS

a.d. 1082. The manor was given by the Conqueror to Miles Crispin.

a.d. 1132. It was granted by charter of Henry I. to the Priory of S. Frideswide.

a.d. 1156. Henry II. About this time Hugh de Plantagenet granted to the Priory of S. Frideswide the tithes of his own demesnes and of his tenants in this manor.

A branch of the Croke family had a seat here, which seems to have been acquired by the marriage of Unton Croke, Esq., Sergeant-at-law, to Anne, daughter and heiress of Richard Hore, Esq., of Marston.

Unton Croke occupies a conspicuous place in the history of the civil wars, as a staunch supporter of the Parliament.

In "Thurloe's State Papers" there is a letter of the 2nd of October, 1655, from Dr. John Owen, the Dean of Christ Church, to the Protector, in which he strongly intercedes in Sergeant Croke's favour that he might be made a judge: it seems however, that the recommendation was not attended to; but in 1656 he was appointed one of the Commissioners under the authority of an Act of Parliament for the security of the Lord Protector, with power to try offenders for high treason, without the intervention of a jury. He acted likewise as a justice of the peace, and there are some entries in the parish register of marriages performed by him in that capacity during the Great Rebellion. He resided chiefly here, and died in 1671, at the age of 77.

His wife had died a few months previously, and they were both buried in the chancel, where there are inscriptions on a flat stone, and on a brass plate to their memory. They left 10 children.

In May 1640, this house was made use of by the Commissioners for the King and the Parliament Army in the treaty for the surrender of Oxford. This house was pulled down in 1843.

The vicarage was valued in the time of Henry VIII. at £40. In the last century it was valued at £26; the present value is £145. Population, 668. The advowson of the vicarage was in the possession of the family of Whorwood from about the year 1600, when Sir W. Browne, of Holton, whose daughter and heiress married a Whorwood, exchanged land at Haseley and Albury for the advowsons and parsonages of Headington and Marston, and the manor of Headington, Marston, and Bolshipton.

In 1685, Dr. Edward • Masters presented as trustee to Thomas Whorwood; in 1705, Robert King presented (hacvice), and in 1718 the Bishop of Oxford collated.

The present patron is Mrs. Evans, widow of the late Master of Pembroke Coll., Oxford.

From "The Gentleman's Magazine" Dec. 20, 1799.

Mr. Urban,

The parish of Marston in Oxfordshire is northward 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 and two aisles, a chancel and a square tower. . . .

The following epitaphs are the only existing memorials of eminent persons contained in the church.

On a flat stone in the chancel is the following inscription—

" O vir, quicumque, es, pusillu' Hoc terrae quo meum tegitur Corpiis mihi ne inideas ? "
Ex. Luc. cap 6, vers 26. Translation:

O man, whoever thou art, dost thou not envy this clod of earth, with which my body is covered.

Vae vobis cum laudaverint Vos omnes homines,
Translation—

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you

UNTON CROKE Serviens ad legem, obiit 28 die Januarii ano D'ni 1670, amioq. aetatis suae 77.

Translation:

UNTON CROKE.

Sergeant-at-law, died 28 January, in the year of our Lord 1670, aged 77- and on a small brass plate inserted in the same stone is the following:

My flesh shall rest in hope Psalm xiv. ver. 10 Hereunder resteth in hopes of resurrection the body of ANN, the wife of unton croke, Sergeant-at-law, who was married to him 8th of November, 1617, and left him and 10 children the 10th day of June, 1670, and in the 69th year of her age.

On a marble fixed against the wall, on the north side of the chancel, are the following inscriptions :—

M.S. RICHARDI CROKE, equitis Servientis ad legem per viginti annos Oxonii burgensis per triginta recordatoris virique Carolo dilectissimi Deo et religioni verae Catholicae semper devotissimi Clientibus fidelis et toti humans genero amicabilem qui vixit omnibus amandus Obiitq. (15 die Septemberis, an D'ni 1683. aetatis suae 60) omnibus flendus praecipue filio suo maestissimo Wright Croke qui hoc erga paternam virtutem et ex amore suo optimum parentum monumentum posuit Prope etiam WRIGHT CROKE, ariniger Praedicti Ricardi

Croke, equitis, filius haeresq. qui ex hoc vita discessit 47 an. aetat Jun 7th, 1705. Item WRIGHT CROKE, armigeri, filii tres Qui teneris in annis defuncti ft. Prope etiam jacet MARIA, uxor charissima Wright Croke, quae obiit 29 Martii 1717. aetat 61.

Translation:

Sacred to the Memory of RICHARD CROKE, Knight, Sergeant-at-law, for twenty _years citizen of Oxford, tor thirty years recorder beloved by King Charles. Always devoted to God and the true Catholic Faith. Faithful to his clients Amiable to all, and loved by all men. He died on the 15th September, in the year of our Lord, 1683, in the 60th year of his age – lamented by all, especially by his sorrowful son Wright Croke, who in filial duty and by reason of his love lor the best of parents erected this monument.

By his side lies RICHARD CROKE, Knight, his son and heir, who departed this life 7th June, 1705 in the 47 year of his age. Also WRIGHT CROKE, Esquire, his third son who died in his infancy. Also by his side lies MARIA, the beloved wife of Wright Croke, Who died 29 March, 1717, aged 61.

On the floor on a small stone :

" CAROLINE CROKE, died 19th July in the yeare of our Lord 167, and the 36th of her age."
In the nave on a plain stone is the following short inscription :

" M.F.S., WALTERUS BARRY. de civit, Nov. Sarum Qui obiit Oxon die Aprilis 22 1722."

On a stone in the south aisle, to the memory of Robert Loder, who died in 1768, is the following specimen of monumental poetry

" I would have my neighbours all be kind and mild, Quiet and civil to my dear wife and child."
This living is a vicarage of but small value, not, as I am informed, more than £26 per annum, which the present worthy incumbent, 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.

Marston Church Goods delivered to the incoming Churchwardens.

Anno 1531. Itm dd. to the said Churchwardens one author clothe of holond. Itm one clothe called a vrle of holond conteyning iiij ells Itm one altar cloth of diaper It one vestment of grene dornix Item one cope of blew sateii of brudges Itm one chalice and patent Itm one chisabyll or vestment of grene sylke Itm one pall of red and russet velvet It" one canapy clothe of ffyne hollond hedgid wth red lace and taysells of red It' iij old stoles of diu'se colors, It' ij pixes of laten, It' iij baner clothes, It' one towell of diaper of ij ells, lost by John bew It' a

canopy case of laten and grene and red saye wt frengs It' a holy water boket and a senser A church cupp of silver It one hand bell It ij candlesticks of laten ltm vti of waxe It' one old crosse It' ij shurpleses It' a byble. A boke of servis Anno 1570. Stuffe. A challis A cupp The churche fane and the brandwen The paten A great clothe and a table clothe A cope and iij vestments ij baner clothes and a stremer.

St. Clement's Press. Oxford.

Kelly's Directory of Oxford, 1914

MARSTON is a parish and village on the river Cherwell, which forms part of the boundary of the parish and across which there is a ferry to this place in connection with the Banbury road, north of Oxford.

The village is 2¼ miles north-north-east from Oxford, in the Mid division of the county, hundred and petty sessional division of Bullingdon, union of Headington, county court district of Oxford, rural deanery of Islip, archdeaconry and diocese of Oxford.

The church of St. Nicholas is a plain but ancient edifice of stone, in the Transitional and Perpendicular styles, consisting of chancel, clerestoried nave, aisles, south porch and a low embattled western tower containing 5 bells: the Perpendicular chancel is well proportioned and has an east window of three lights, with a spray of oak foliage carved in the apex of the dripstone: the recess of the first window on the south side is carried down and forms a sedile, and eastward of it is a small square piscina; on the same side is a blocked door, with a heavy carved label on the outside: some fragments of ancient glass linger in these windows: the chancel arch is Transition Norman and near it is a hagioscope looking from the south aisle; in the north aisle is an aumbry: the nave has arcades of four arches on the north and three on the south side, of the same style as the chancel arch, but not equally early: the clerestoried windows are Late Perpendicular, as are the walls of both aisles and the north door: the tower partakes of the same features: the pulpit is Jacobean, and in the pier above is a blocked entrance once connected with the rood loft; in the chancel is a mural monument and a brass to Unton Croke esq. M.P. for Oxford, 1659, and one of the commissioners for the security of the Protector, serjeant-at-law, ob. 1671, and to Anne, his wife, daughter and heir of Richard Here [= Hore] esq. of Marston; the church was restored in 1883 at a cost of £1,400, when the chancel was new roofed: there are 200 sittings: the churchyard, considerably enlarged during 1894, formerly contained a cross, but this was taken down in 1830 in order to mend the church wall. The chalice is of early 14th century workmanship. The register dates from the year 1654. The living is a vicarage, tithe rent-charge £182, net yearly value £191, in the gift of the Bishop of Oxford, and held since 1905 by the Rev. John Hamilton Mortimer M.A. of Magdalen College, Oxford.

There is a Mission room at New Marston, connected with the church, and a Boy Scouts' hall for the two villages, built at the expense of Miss Peto in 1913; it is equipped with a rifle range, which is also used by the Marston Rifle Club.

One hundred acres of land in this parish are let for the benefit of the proprietors of Marston and of the poor; the portion assigned to the poor is fixed by a committee according to a scale

agreed upon; the rent-charge is termed "Forest money". A portion of the Forest farm formerly belonged to the poor of Marston, given to them in lieu of forest rights in the time of Charles II; this has been sold and is now vested in the Charity Commissioners; the income is distributed yearly in coal.

The village cross, distinct from that formerly in the churchyard, stood at a turning on the road at a point now marked by a cross cut in the wall by the roadside; it was taken down about 1830 on the alleged reason that it impeded the traffic, and the materials used for mending the road and making some granary stairs in the village.

The old manor house, the residence during the Civil War of Unto Croke esq., was for the most part removed in 1843 and partly replaced by stone cottages; the portion of the old house still remaining retains on the north side two gable windows and a blocked doorway, and is called "Cromwell Castle": here in 1645 (May 22), Cromwell and Fairfax met to take measures for the siege of Oxford, and the mansion was also used as a place of meeting in May, 1646, by the Royal and Parliamentary Commissioners during the negotiations for the surrender of Oxford.

To the Croke family, of Marston, belonged the eccentric wanderer, Charles Croke, who in 1667, under the pseudonym of "Rodolphus", published an account of his rambles, entitled "Youth's Inconstancy".

Colonel Hoole is lord the manor. The principal landowners are Brasenose and Corpus Christi colleges, the University of Oxford and the trustees of the late Edwin Rippington esq.

The soil is loam and clay; subsoil, clay and gravel. The land is chiefly pasture, but wheat and barley are also grown. The area is 1,160 acres; rateable value, £4,108; the population in 1911 was 716.

Part of New Marston is in the parish of Headington.

Parish Clerk, Richard Ward.

Post Office.—Richard Joseph Ward, sub-postmaster . Letters arrive through Oxford at 6.45 a.m. and 1.20 p.m. & dispatched at 12.10 & 6.10 p.m. week days; on Sundays 11.30 p.m. Headington is the nearest money order & telegraph office. Postal orders are issued here, & paid

Post Office, New Marston.—Mrs. Louisa Carter, subpostmistress. Letters arrive through Oxford at 7.15 a.m. & 1.15 p.m.; Sundays 7.15 a.m.; dispatched at 7.40 a.m., 12.30 & 6.10 p.m.; Sundays, 11.40 p.m. St. Clement's is the nearest money order & telegraph office. Postal orders are issued here, & paid

Parish Council (consisting of 7 members: Chairman: William Roberts, Messrs. C. Webb, George Gunn, Ernest Aires, R. J. Ward, S. G. Buckett, John Eadle & William Roberts. Clerk & Assistant Overseer, Arthur Broughton.

National School (mixed), erected in 1851, enlarged in 1887 & 1894; it will now hold 125 children; average attendance, 78; Herbert Chapman, master.

Boy Scouts (9th Oxford Troop), Miss E. Peto, scoutmaster, Hall, New Marston

Carriers—Willis, to Oxford daily, except Thursday.; Sumner & Poulton, wed. & Sat.

Archaeological Discovery 1925

OLD MARSTON, 2 1/4 miles N.E. of Oxford. Associations with the siege of the city by the parliamentarians. Manor House, called Cromwell's Castle, headquarters of besieging army. Surrender of Oxford accepted here. Remains of earthworks recently leveled in Trinity and Magdalen College cricket grounds. Coins found.

[NUT conference souvenir. J.R. Benson. p.130. 1925]

Planning 1931

This is one of three villages – Marston, Woodeaton and Elsfield – which, lying to the east of Oxford and separated from its northern residential area of the Cherwell River, are somewhat inaccessible. With improved communication from Oxford, possibly by a new road from the Banbury Road, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Holywell Park and crossing the Cherwell, these three charming and comparatively unspoiled agricultural villages might form the nuclei for well-controlled residential development in the neighbourhood. Marston, the largest of the three, can hardly be expected long to escape an inundation of working-class houses from the near neighbourhood of Headington with which it is presently connected. Marston may also form one day an outpost of cottages to an important offshoot of buildings (possibly cottages) which may shortly discover the advantageous situation of the stretch of elevated land so near to Oxford, which lies in its vicinity. The new by-pass road will pass, as planned, north of Marston.

[Regional Survey, 1931, p48 – {Oxfordshire: a regional survey. Regional Planning Report: The Earl of Mayo, S. D. Adshead, Patrick Abercrombie OUP 1931}]

1938 (John Piper, Shell Guide to Oxfordshire)

Marston. Overpowering development on Oxford road. Village spared. The church has a lot of its old woodwork.

1942 (Arthur Mee, The King's England)

Marston. A quiet place among elms and green fields.

William Morris

East of the city worse things were to happen. Early in the twentieth century, in his modest bicycle shop, William Morris, patching tyres and straightening handlebars, dreamed of the

combustion engine, and now homes for the workers, gimcrack in shed-speckled gardens, engulf the lyric slopes of Shotover, Headington's passionate village, mud-bound Marston and Littlemore's road to the hills.

[p. 97] (*Oxfordshire. Joanna Cannon. The County Books*) Robert Hale Ltd n.d. but just post WW2

1949 (Reginald Turnor, Oxfordshire)

Marston might please the 'Waterstock, Wytham, and Waterperry' poet. There is a ferry over the Cherwell; a stubborn hold on the Oxfordshire village sense in some charming stone, thatch, and even pink wash; and the nearness to Oxford. But I think it is too near. Summertown and an arterial road and Headington hedge it about too closely. It would be easy to be there 'student and don', but hardly, I fear, 'countryman'. Still, it is perhaps more fortunate than any other village so close to the city.

Shell Guide to Oxfordshire 1953

Marston: overpowering development outside Oxford. Village spread. The church has a lot of its old woodwork.

(*Shell Guide to Oxfordshire. John Piper. Faber 1953*)

1965 (James Morris, Oxford)

The ferry across the Cherwell at Marston has been in continuous use at least since the thirteenth century. The church at Old Marston is famous for its bell-ringing and has a delightful new bell loft of polish oak. The parish church at Old Marston is a well-known centre of bell-ringing: in 1958 its ringers rang a world record peal of doubles, 12,600 changes in 6 hours 20 minutes, beating a record established in 1775, and if you look at the board in the belfry you will find that the methods they have initiated there include the Magdalen Bob, the Wadham Bob, the Nuffield Bob, and even one named for St. Frideswide.... The Victoria Arms at Marston Ferry, with a nice peeling inn-sign of the young queen, is a popular place to punt to for breakfast on May Morning.... The fourteenth-century chalice at Marston church is probably the oldest in use anywhere in England.

The Haynes Family of Old Marston

The Haynes family have lived in Marston for many generations and can be traced back to the 11th century. My father, Charles Richard Haynes and his three brothers -Oliver Arthur Haynes, Ivan Ralph Haynes and Gerald Malcolm Haynes were all born in the thatched farmhouse then known as Home Farm, now known as Alan Court. The rear ground, garden and farmyard went right up to the boundary of the Churchyard.

Mr Lewis Field of 27 Iffley Road, Oxford purchased the Farm and fields and my Grandfather, Charles Henry Haynes was the quitting tenant of Home Farm due to leave the property on 29 September 1922 (Michaelmas) but my Uncle Gerald was born which put a spanner in the

works, so the family had an extension to the lease and did not leave until the end of October as the document for compensation says "remaining in possession of the whole of the house" notice to quit was extended to 1 November 1922.

Arbitration followed and carried out by Thomas Bowan under the Agricultural Act 1908 and 1921 and poor old Mr Field was awarded £14.04.00 as he was the Landlord and it was impossible for him to let the Farm owing to inadequate accommodation as the house was not available.

Upon leaving Home Farm the family moved to Bishops Farm where they shared the Farmhouse with Walter and Maggie Haynes and their three children Stanley, Babs and Eric. I was always told by Oliver that the time the families all lived there together were very happy days for all concerned.

It was there that Oliver had a mysterious illness. The local Doctor, Dr Dickinson had been treating him and it was not until Oliver's mother mentioned to the Doctor "Don't you think he looks a bit yellow?" that the penny dropped and the diagnosis was made.

It was at Bishops Farmhouse that Stanley Haynes bought his first motorbike, dismantled it, cleaned and renovated it and sold it for a profit. This sent Stanley along the career path of Engineering. Later, he set up a Garage and petrol pump at Cross Farm.

The family stayed at Bishops Farm for about 12 months. It was there that Auntie Maggie taught Oliver to propagate Geraniums and grow many other plants. Oliver was always a keen gardener and I'm sure the time spent at Cross Farm with Auntie Maggie was the beginning of his love for gardening.

The family next moved to Cross Farm where they moved in with Uncle Raymond Haynes who was a bachelor at the time. The boys had much fun with Raymond when most nights when he went upstairs to change, they followed him and he would extinguish candles and make noises as they hid under the bed as he searched for them growling and scratching like a mouse. It was dark in the large rooms with sloping ceilings but they enjoyed this frightening atmosphere.

The family finally left Cross Farm and moved to Boults Farm where my Grandfather had a new house built. The house was finished in 1936 at a cost of £785.

The Farm remained in the family owned by the four brothers until the last field was sold to George Wimpey who built 118 houses. The Roads on the estate were named by the brothers – Horseman Close named after my Great Grandmother's maiden name, Clays Close named after one of the Fields sold to J A Pye, Jessops Close named after one of the fields sold to A C Carter and Dents Close named after Oliver's Wife's maiden name.

I have many documents and photographs which show my family's life in the village. My late Uncle Oliver who was a very meticulous person and did not believe in throwing anything away accumulated these documents over the years. I have spent many hours looking through these papers which hold so much family history.

I feel very lucky to belong to a family with such strong roots in such a wonderful village like Old Marston. One of my many regrets is not having documented the many hours of conversation I had with my Mother and Oliver over the years as I cared for them in the winter of their years.

Charlie Haynes

The Reading Room

Until recently there was a building in Marston, which was very closely connected with the history of the Women's Institute.

Standing at the roadside, in the middle of the village it was used as a carpenter's workshop by the late Mr. J. Honour. After Mr. Honour's death in 1916 the building was first rented and then sold by Mrs Honour to the then Vicar, the Rev J.H. Mortimer, who converted it into a Reading and Club Room for the men of the village. But it was not long before it was being used for all the village activities.

It was in the upper, or Reading Room as it was called, that the newly formed W.I. held its first meeting in 1922 and where it continued to meet for the next seven years.

In 1929 Mrs Honour had the idea of converting the lower room, and offering it to the W.I. for their exclusive use – a suggestion which was very warmly approved by the members.

The war years brought change. By this time the Institute had moved across the road to the British Legion Hall and what had previously been their home became the overflow for the Village School. The Reading Room had not however, seen the last of the W.I. In 1948 back they came, but this time to the upper room which had seen their beginning. They were now the tenants of the Church to which Mr Mortimer had given the building.

With the passage of time the Reading Room fell into disrepair and it was felt that the structure was not sound enough to justify any large amount being spent on repairs. Yet village activities continued to take place there but only because at that time there was no other hall available. At last the time came when the children moved to the new Primary School and the Reading Room was no longer considered safe for large gatherings.

It was at this point that a member of the Church offered to buy the Reading Room – but on conditions. The purchase money should be used to convert the old Village School into a much-needed Church Hall. The land on which the Reading Room had stood would then be given back to the Church to be converted into a Garden in memory of the late J.H.Mortimer who had, during his long incumbency, done so much for the village. This, however, left the Church with the not inconsiderable cost of demolition. But Marston has never lacked benefactors. Another member of the congregation offered to bear this cost. It was demolished in 1958/9. It was only left for a Committee of local gardening experts to be formed and a subscription list opened, and the money was forthcoming for outlay and maintenance.

To-day Marston has its Church Hall, its Village Hall and an attractive little garden where once the old Reading Room stood.

Agreement on Marston Caravan Site Improvement 1961

IMPROVEMENTS will be made to Bullingdon Rural District Council's caravan site at Marston following a meeting between Bullingdon councillors and officials and members of Marston Parish Council, Mr. H. H. Gunstone told Oxford and District Trades Council last night.

The meeting took place on the site on Wednesday and "much to our utter amazement," said Mr. Gunstone, the Bullingdon representatives were co-operative in every way.

"They were even at one with us in wanting to make this a model caravan site," he declared. They had promised improvements in lighting, drainage and roads.

"They asked us to set up a site committee and then they will meet this committee to talk about the caravan tenants' difficulties." They had also promised that, in 12 months, they would review the rents. "We were surprised Bullingdon RDC met us, and we were grateful for the sake of the caravan tenants," said Mr. Gunstone. "We can't expect a widespread improvement in the whole district, but we have managed to do something about this site." Mr Gunstone did however criticise the RDC for not making provision for the occupants of 800 caravans in the district.

The City Council, County Council and Bullingdon RDC are the cause of all the trouble with unlicensed sites because they have made no provision for licensed sites. That is the only solution.

Private operators

"Do they want these people to live under hedges, or in caves? The authorities just don't want to recognise their responsibilities."

Mr. Gunstone came under fire from Mr. Harry Mears, who wanted to know why he criticised the local authorities but never the private site operators who were exploiting the caravan dwellers.

Mr. Mears also asked who Mr Gunstone was representing when he brought reports about caravan sites before the Trades Council, particularly as the caravan sub-committee had not met for some time.

Mr. Gunstone said that on the particular occasion to which he had referred he was representing the Parish Council, of which he was a member, and he had reported to the Trades Council because it had a sub-committee which was dealing with caravan problem.

He was against any exploitation, whoever was responsible. Mr. Arthur Dent agreed with Mr. Mears that the implication was that the local authorities were the people who were exploiting

the caravan dwellers. The only answer to the caravan problem, he said was to build more houses.

Oxford Mail Friday March 24 1961 page 11

Never More Mellifluous at Much Maligned Marsh Town

Below is an article from the Oxford Times – from 1960s exact date unknown

At Church by Layman

THIS morning of Palm Sunday which ushers in Holy Week, dawns bright and clear with a brilliant sun radiating joy and glory over the Oxfordshire countryside — a most perfect day on which to commemorate Our Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem to the hosannas of the multitude.

It is indeed a prospect to gladden the heart as well as the senses. Forgotten are the fretting difficulties, the relentless pressure of the everyday world, maybe only for an all too brief moment, but put aside they are by the overwhelming expectancy of great things to come. And, the eyes are delighted, no less than the spirit is uplifted, by the scene displayed on every hand — everywhere is the abundant promise of new life.

Never, or so it seems, have the meadows been so vividly green, never the birds more mellifluous, even the cavalcade of cars encountered along the roads seems less obtrusive than usual; this is the Lord's doing and it is "marvellous in our eyes as the Psalmist sang.

On clay

The ancient parish of Old Marston has been much maligned. A schoolmaster, noted also as something of a poet, once wrote a quatrain of doggerel which began:

"O! who would live at Marston, at Marston in the mud . . ." and it is true that, built on Oxford clay and only a few feet above the River Cherwell and the brooks which flow into it, its fields are liable to flood on the slightest provocation.

So it is not surprising that the Anglo-Saxons named it "Marsh Town" in their barbaric language . . . "very appropriate" comments one historian, but its well-watered situation was responsible for achieving its reputation as an ideal situation for milkmen and market gardeners.

Its best approach has always been on foot, and the most popular route that which crossed the ferry at the end of a narrow lane, which is now no more, but the pedestrian-pilgrim can still find an attractive walk across the University Parks, with a tunnel to circumvent the traffic on the new link-road.

However the new thoroughfare is not to be disdained, for it has the merit of enabling the traveller on wheels to avoid the eyesore of the main road from the city and the intimidation of the bypass.

Every age

But no matter, whichever way Marston is reached, it is still worth the effort, still one of the most attractive places on the outskirts of Oxford, analogous to Iffley, though its people have been stubborn enough to resist all attempts to bring it within the city boundaries.

It still retains all the characteristics of a village, with a meandering street which winds between footpaths with grassy borders, and houses of every age, size and description — thatched, tiled and slated — each having in common a well-tended garden, gay with flowering trees and spring blooms.

But all this is an introduction to the heart of this most pleasant community; past the house where Oliver Cromwell once stayed and where were negotiated the terms for the surrender of Royalist Oxford, and so to St Nicholas', which has been the religious centre of the parish for more than 700 years.

Bells Peal

What a lovely place this is, lying back from the road in an immaculate little graveyard— there is an extension further on down the road for the last repose of the faithful — gay with clusters of daffodils, not dancing in the breeze, for there is none to sway their delicate trumpets, but standing stiff, sentinels of golden beauty.

The bells are pealing forth, the line of motor cars along the verge is growing every second, the path to the venerable building overflows with bicycles and a queue of worshippers waits at the porch.

Even before the calling-bell has ceased its final summons, there is some difficulty in fitting everyone into a seat, how those who arrive later are accommodated is known only to the sidesmen.

The Vicar, the Rev Paul Rimmer, devoted pastor of the people of this place for almost 20 years, stands just inside, the doorway, hemmed in by crucifer and choir — a most cramped assembly.

He gives an all but unseen signal, the organ crashes out in the "Gloria Laus," traditional day above all others procession somehow formed.

Then there spill the church a stream of children, bearing branches of greenery which bear proudly our aisles, time and before retiring to seats.

For Young

Such is the intro to a most inspiring Communion considering the fact that it is not the drab Series in first part of which specially tailored for younger ones — will constitute a goodly proportion of those present range in age from babes in arms to teenagers.

Altogether it is pie and homely gathering; the sacraments carried to it are a simple bread and flagon of wine the Vicar is all but breathless by the time he has round to clasp hands of as many of his flock as possible in the peace.

A Village Hall for Old Marston

Oxford Mail, Wednesday 29th August 1962: "Opening in September, it's booked up already"

by Margaret Parkinson

Old Marston's new village hall in Oxford Road, Old Marston, will be officially opened on September 6 1962.

The one-storey building on the Oxford Road recreation ground, will be called Mortimer Hall and has cost more than £7,000 including equipment.

The idea of building a hall for village activities was raised before the last war, remained in abeyance during the war years, and was re-considered in 1948.

Plans remained indefinite until about three years ago when a new village hall management committee was formed.

"There had been a number of earlier projects for different types of buildings, mainly pre-fabricated ones, but for one reason or another the projects were frustrated," explains Mr A. L. Pollard, secretary of the management committee, who is a University librarian at the Taylor Institute.

"By the time we took over as the management committee some people had come to the firm conclusion that they would never get a village hall. But many local residents are now showing a considerable amount of interest in it.

"What really gave a new impetus to the building of a village hall was the possibility of incorporating a permanent branch of the county library in it, to replace the mobile library service in the village."

Mortimer Hall

The building will be called Mortimer Hall, in memory of the late Rev. John Mortimer, a former vicar of Marston, who gave the village its recreation ground in Oxford Road, together with some money towards the cost of building a village hall at the side of the ground.

A third of the cost has been provided by the parish, through accumulated contributions from the village and the proceeds of Fetes and the concert party shows over several years.

Another third is being contributed by the Ministry of Education and the remainder will come from the local authorities.

Fully Booked

Already the village hall is almost fully booked up. Scottish dancing on Tuesday evenings will be a new feature of village community life in which anyone can join and on Saturdays, talks,

demonstrations, exhibition and cultural events will be arranged by the village hall management committee.

The management committee is also sponsoring a nursery play group which will be held each morning from Mondays to Fridays with qualified staff.

Monday evenings will be reserved for youth club meetings and Wednesday evenings for the new boys club led by Mr Michael Howard. On Thursday the Marston Players will rehearse there and on Friday evenings whist drives, bingo drives, dances and other social events will be held.

Easily Adapted

The one-storey village hall is designed for versatility. The main hall, which has one wall composed entirely of glass windows, has a stage for amateur dramatics and a maple strip sprung floor for dancing.

Sliding doors between the main hall and the entrance hall can be pushed back to allow more space when dances are held.

A multi-purpose committee room adjoining the main hall can also be used as a dressing room or a refreshment room.

One door leads on to the stage and another side of the committee room adjoins the kitchen. A serving hatch opens from the kitchen on to the entrance hall, and cloakrooms are provided. Opposite the main hall, on the right-hand side of the front entrance, is a small library, to be used as a County Library branch. It has its own entrance from Oxford Road and can be used as a separate unit from the rest of the building, if desired.

Outside there is a paved forecourt. Bicycle racks will be at one side and a car park is nearby. Voluntary labour from members of the management committee is helping to do the outside construction work.

The exterior of the village hall is made of brown Uxbridge flint bricks with cedar boarding panels over the windows.

The flat roof is made of bituminous felt and strawboard, and roof level of the main hall is higher than that of the other rooms. The building is roughly rectangular in shape with a slight projection at the front formed by the library.

Central Idea

"The idea was to make the village hall as flexible as possible," says Mr Philip del Nevo, of the Oxford Architects' Partnerships, who designed it.

Marston News: PARISH CHURCH OF SAINT NICHOLAS

Below is the text from the Marston news published December 1970 This publication was the fore-runner of the Marston Times.

I DO LIKE A LIE IN ON A SUNDAY

Yes, and so do I. I manage an extra half an hour on a Sunday when the service is at 8 am, whereas during most weekdays it is at 7.15 am.

But for some people even 10 o'clock on a Sunday morning is too early, It's asking too much of people. Is it?

If this is the main time when Christians come together round the Lord's table.

If this is the time when we can pray together for the parish, the Church, the world.

If this is the time when God's Word is proclaimed to us and we receive His grace.

Then surely its worth bestirring ourselves, making the extra effort to be 'in the Lord's House, on the Lord's Day, at the Lord's Service'. Someone was heard to say at a recent Confirmation Service "I'll bet its a long time since they've seen the Church as full as this." The person who told me this said: "I wanted to tell them: 'That's not true'."

Certainly on Sunday mornings at 10 am the Church is full with a complete cross-section of the parish – lively youngsters and elderly folk; technicians and teachers; builders and dons.

A Vicar once put up a beautiful sign outside his Church He instructed the artist to leave two letters out of the word Church A lapsed Church member was quick to notice this and asked the Vicar if he'd noticed the omission: "U R" missing, said the Vicar, "and we need you and you need us".

A Happy New Year to you and your Family.

Paul N. Rimmer

In The Centre or on The Fringe

For centuries St. Nicholas Church has been physically the centre of the old village, by virtue of the building, and until the advent of the Welfare State in the forefront of local social concern.

It is still recognised by many as important for christenings, weddings and funerals, but thought totally irrelevant for 'between times'. We feel strongly that the Church is still very relevant for the 'between times' of the seventies, and to that end have launched this newspaper. It is a new venture for the Church and is aimed as a two-way platform for news and ideas to flow, from the church to the community, and indeed more particularly from the community to the church. In this way, perhaps, the new village of Old Marston will be aware of the Church, now physically on the fringe, and do something to bring it back into the social centre of village life.

We invite comment on articles and especially ideas on what the community of Marston expect from St. Nicholas in 1971.

*Please address your letters to: R.M. Sharp,
2 Hill Top Cottages,
Elsfield, Oxford.*

CHILDREN AND GIVING

by Mrs Bette Jones

Young, active people at St Nicholas C.P. School in Old Marston have been raising money and bringing happiness to the community for a variety of causes and events in many different ways.

As the school term closed for the Christmas holidays last Friday, Mr. Peter Jones, the Headmaster, said: "Although we have appealed all term for funds for the School Swimming Pool, the children have looked beyond themselves to the needs of others both here and overseas. On their own initiative, with the help of the teachers, they have undertaken some inspiring and imaginative projects. My staff and I are very proud of their achievements."

Mrs. Annette Chadwick, who teaches a class of lower juniors aged from 7-9 years recently took a party of 16 children to sing Carols and Songs to patients in the Radcliffe Infirmary. They entertained patients in Rowley, Alexandra and Leopold (Children's) Wards with Songs accompanying themselves on Glockenspiels and Xylophones Children in Mrs. Bonnie Johnston's class of Upper Juniors were very concerned about the fate of the East Pakistan people after seeing a Panorama programme on Television about the disastrous cyclone and the tragedy it had brought. They decided to raise funds for the East Pakistan Disaster Fund. As enthusiasm spread like wild-fire throughout the school, Mrs. Johnston gathered together a party of young carollers from the Juniors who went to sing in Marston and raised E5 4s. 1d. The children in Mrs Johnston's class also baked a Gingerbread House which was raffled to the parents and raised £2 15s. 0d. for the Disaster Fund.

The Magpie television programme's appeal for funds for a teaching machine for handicapped children will benefit by £25. This is the sum raised by children in Mrs. Marjorie Hensel's class. Their inventiveness in fundraising ranged from 'Guessing the Scarecrows Name' and 'How many Peas in the Jar', to selling sweets and cakes they had made themselves. Earlier in the term two of the children raised 15/- for the Royal Naval Lifeboat Fund by making flags and selling them. They even built their own model of a lifeboat to illustrate their appeal.

During the whole of this year the Children throughout the school have managed to raise. £100 to buy an Oxygen Machine for Spina Bifida Children and next term ten children will be going to the Radcliffe Infirmary to see the machine in operation.

To end these activities all the decorations made by the Infants have been taken to the Nuffield Orthopaedic Hospital, and those from the Junior department have gone to the Alexandra Ward of the Radcliffe Infirmary.

M.R.A. Meeting

The Marston Residents' Association is to hold a General Meeting at 7.45 pm on Monday, January 11th in St. Nicholas County Primary School. Mr George Hine of Raymund Road tells us that all residents of Old Marston are invited to attend this meeting.

A report on the work of the Association will be given and a new committee elected. There will be an opportunity for residents to ask questions.

After the conclusion of the business side, there will be an interval for tea and biscuits followed by a programme of colour slides illustrating memorable holidays taken in such contrasting places as California and the Orkney and Shetland Islands. In addition, residents may like to bring one or two of their own holiday 35 mm. colour transparencies. A prize will be awarded for the one judged best.

Concessionary Bus Fares (1974)

Marston Parish Council has received representations from the Risinghurst & Sandhills and Littlemore parish councils concerning the concessionary bus fare arrangements for elderly and disabled people. At its November meeting the council decided to approach South Oxfordshire District Council to see whether it would be possible for those eligible in the South Oxfordshire district to receive the same benefits as those in the city of Oxford.

From the Archives: Parish Council Notes from December 1974 (Marston Times)

The Village Hall and the 11-14 Year Olds (1974)

The parish council discussed the possibility of providing some sort of club facilities for the 11-14 age group within the village. It seems probable that the Village Hall could be made available for the purpose on one evening each week if sufficient helpers can be found. The parish council would be very pleased to hear from people who are willing to assist, and anybody interested should contact the Parish Clerk, Mr. L. Garner, 31 Oxford Road, Marston.

From the Archives: Parish Council Notes from December 1974 (Marston Times)

Marston Ferry (1974)

The Oxford Preservation Trust, owners of the Victoria Arms, sought the views of the parish council as to whether the Marston Ferry, which has been operated across the Cherwell from the Victoria Arms for 500 years, should be closed. Council members were strongly opposed to the idea of closing the ferry. The council decided to suggest to the Trust that the ferry should

be converted so that it can be operated by the passengers. Estimates of the cost of restoring the ferry were not given, but the parish council agreed that they would be willing to make a special contribution towards these if restoration should prove to be possible.

From the Archives: Parish Council Notes from December 1974 (Marston Times)

CONFIRMATION—Time for a change?

On 1st December 1970, 40 young people were confirmed in St. Nicholas Church by the Bishop of Dorchester. This is probably a record for St. Nicholas, but taking the country as a whole, the confirmation rate has fallen by one-third in the last six years. The present pattern of initiation in the Christian faith is perhaps not as effective today as it was in earlier years. Its steady progression from infant baptism, through Catechism to Confirmation and first Communion was well suited to a static society, most of whose members accepted the Church and its teaching as a part of the fabric of existence.

Now things have changed. People change their jobs more frequently, moving their homes into different communities. Families are split and it becomes difficult for people to feel any real loyalty to one particular place. Under these conditions, the Church's position is much less secure than it used to be, with only a minority professing the Christian faith.

Should the present pattern of confirmation be changed? This is one of the many important subjects being discussed in the Oxford Diocese right now. One item that has found favour is that children should be permitted to become communicants at an early age, say seven, and be confirmed later at 17 or 18. This would perhaps make the Parish Communion Service at St. Nicholas at 10 am every Sunday more meaningful to parents and children. What do you think? Your opinions are important!

RESIDENTS OBJECT

Ten residents of Old Marston are signing a holding objection asking the County Education Committee to delay its decision on increasing the number of places at Peers School, Littlemore.

At present the school takes 120 children between the ages of 14 and 16 from Marston, but when the building is extended in 1971/2 this number will be raised to 300. The feeling of those who signed the petition is that the extensions should be made to the Harlow School. This would mean that time and expense were saved in transport and that the children would be able to join in extra-curricular activities more easily.

On the other hand, the Harlow School is not sufficiently equipped with staff or facilities to teach up to 0-level standard, and for this reason most parents would prefer their children to go to Littlemore.

In addition, the long-term situation is confused by the raising of the school-leaving age to 16, due to take effect in 1972 and by the fact that there is a continuing uncertainty about the incorporation of Marston into the City.

In this event the whole education system in Marston would need to be modified to fit in with that of Oxford.

Cannon's Farm

[Cannon's Farm](#), in Elsfield Road, Old Marston, will shortly be inhabited again after ten years of neglect.

The old farmhouse, also known as [The Elms](#), is being converted into two dwellings, but retaining the original exterior.

Interesting features of the building, which dates from the late 17th or early 18th century, include the eastern end which appears to have been used as a dairy, and decorative and internal structural features such as beams and cornices. The Victorian porch over the front entrance is also noteworthy.

Because of these features and especially because of its position in relation to the other buildings in this part of Marston, Cannon's Farm, which had been listed as a historic building many years ago, was in 1968 made the object of a preservation order by the County Council. This was contested by the owner but upheld by a Ministry enquiry in February of last year. As a result of this, the character of the old farmhouse together with the two yews monkey-puzzle and walnut tree is being kept.

As a footnote, readers may be interested to know the origin of the name Cannon's Farm. The Cannons were an old Marston family of the nineteenth century. John Cannon was a Church warden and the Cannon gravestones form part of the path to the north door of the Church.

Jon Stallworthy

Jon Stallworthy lived at Long Farm on Elsfield Road. He died on 19th November 2014. He would be seen frequently walking in the village and surrounding fields. Best remembered as a biographer and a champion of World War 1 poets, but also as a respected poet in his own right. It is said that he used his walks to compose verse.

He was a University Professor and Fellow of Wolfson College and twice acted as its President. He was educated at the Dragon School and later at Magdalen College, so he had strong Oxford roots. His father, Sir John Stallworthy, some will remember as an eminent obstetrician here.

His account of his poetic apprenticeship is contained in a book "Singing School, The Making of a Poet" published in 1998.

Our Village

The village developed along a ridge of river gravel overlying Oxford clay which surrounds the settlement and gives rise to the name Marsh town/Marston. The parish was included in the Manor of Headington, and Court Place (built early 17th) in Oxford Road was the demesne, or home farm and the manorial records were kept there. In 1279 the Hundred Rolls mention a ferry, probably near, what is now, the Victoria Arms, its successor running until the 1950s, and a mill at the north end of Mill Lane (Sescutt Farm) at the confluence of Bayswater Brook and the Cherwell.

From the 14th, Oriel, Magdalen, Corpus Christ and Brazenose Colleges appear as land owners. Only Brazenose still owns land here today, mainly south of the Marston Ferry Road. In the 17th many of the stone houses were built including Mansion House, Church Farm, Cross Farm, Cannons Farm, Alan Court, Cross Cottage and the Orchard, all being of the long house type with a through passage. There were other smaller houses built of stone at this time, some of which remain.

In the 18th the Mansion House became a poor house, but in 1834 the Sims family divided it into Cromwell House and the Manor House, the latter being remodelled with an ashlar front. Together with the building of Bryher Cottage, Boults Lodge, Colthern's Farm and cottages in Mill Lane, this was the last stone construction in Marston. From this time, locally made brick and slate were used and there were several skilled builders living in the village.

For many centuries there was a cross at the junction of Oxford Road, Mill Lane and Elsfeld Road. It had lost its top cross centuries before, but the pedestal and upright were removed in 1832. There are several paintings from the early 19th showing this in place.

Land ownership has had a big impact on keeping a rural feel to the village. Together with the Brazenose land to the south, Oxford Preservation Trust owns land either side of the Marston Ferry Road and to the north of that the City own the old Almonds Farm. Agricultural activities continue along this strip bordering the Cherwell. Eastwards, the City owns the allotments and sports fields, while a few paddocks are held by the OPT. All the surrounding land is Green belt. the inner edge of which was confirmed in the 1990s.

For centuries, working life centred on small farms producing food for the city – particularly dairying for which the land is best suited. In the smaller cottages were found supporting trades – labourers, field workers, laundresses and sempstresses. Many of these cottages were removed in the first half of the 20th. In the words of Sir George Clark (19th) 'Marston became a village where no one lived who pretended to the rank of gentleman'.

But things began to change between the wars in the 20th. For centuries, the only ways to Oxford were over the ferry and across the fields, or down the Marston Road and over Magdalen Bridge. In the 1930s the A40 was built providing another bridge across the Cherwell and the gap between New and Old Marston began to be filled with houses. In the 1970s, the Marston Ferry Road provided easy access for London commuters to reach the station, and the arrival of the still growing hospital complex on Headington Hill meant the influx of medical professionals looking for a convenient place to live. Marston has changed from being a rather nondescript little village on the edge of the city, to being an attractive place with high property values.

Adapted from a talk given by Lucy Hughes in a talk to the Civic Society 2007

Census: 1900s

Year Population

1901 668

1911 716

1921 729

1931 405 (after boundary revision)

1941 (no census taken)

1951 1278

1961 3560 3.5 persons per acreage (total 1011 acres) (male 1795, female 1765) (private households 1058, population in private households 3542, rooms occupied 4594, 0.78 persons per room, 19.2% persons at more than 1 1/2 per room)

Bullington RD (district)