

## Beckett & The Barrington Presentation Notes

Welcome. First of all I'll explain briefly about Beckett and it's location

- Slide 1. Location of Beckett – couldn't be better situated. Several natural water-courses
- 2. We have proof that early man was at Beckett. These Neolithic flints were found in the gardens at Beckett in the 1950s
- 3. We also know that Stone Age people were hunting close by & carrying out domestic chores like clothes making
- 4 - 8 Flints from Pennyhooks Valley
- 10. The Watchfield Triangle. Excavations have shown Stone Age, Iron Age, Saxon on top and the burials discovered when the By-Pass was built. Anglo Saxon Charter of 931AD gives us an accurate boundary
- 11. Roman discovery very close to Beckett and more in Wellington Woods
- 12. A significant Saxon settlement. Grave goods of high quality
- 13. Domesday Book entry shows Beckett (Becote) had a separate entry. It was a village in its own right and was assessed as 2 manors.
- 14. Alec's Water colour showing how Beckett might have been
- 15. Norman period village sketch
- 16. King John's Mandate reference from 1204
- 17. We know there must have been a significant house or building at Beckett that would have been suitable for royalty

18. The relatively modern house – we are not talking about this
19. Back to old house. Somewhere in this complex was a very early building
20. Poll Tax of 1381, shows a small community
21. The Manorial descent from that period. We have 200 years of obscurity, but we're working on it.
22. We have this drawing from the estate map of 1815. It shows a a very irregular mass of buildings. We think this is because of all the alterations and additions through the centuries
23. The Ride, direct from the old house to the Church
24. The top of The Ride today
25. So we are talking about this early house. ([Show water colour from Anthony Alderson's documents.](#))
- 26/27. Not this house. More on this later.

It's at this point in our history that it starts to get complicated. So I will refer more closely to my notes and I'll ask for help from Vivien.

- 28 Sir Henry Marten owned Beckett and had done since Feb 1618, when he bought it from Sir William Owen. He was still the owner just before the start of the English Civil War, when Englishman fought Englishman. It didn't really finish until 1660 – so nearly 20 years of upheaval.
29. Sir Henry Marten was a Judge. He is the man that did much for the inhabitants of Shrivenham, the Almshouses for instance.
- 30 the His son Henry (known as Harry). He was the Regicide, the rebel. He is

31 one who added his signature to the Death Warrant of King Charles 1<sup>st</sup>.

We could easily get side-tracked here, but let's not. What is relevant is that they owned Beckett at the start of and during the Civil War.

32. Then we come to John Wildman, another notorious name in our story of Beckett. He was a politician and probably had legal training. He was also a military man in the Parliamentary army during the Civil War. He had made a lot of money from the forfeited lands of Royalists and in 1657 he purchased the Beckett estate from his friend Henry Marten. Baron Macaulay sums up John Wildman for us rather nicely:

**Vivien:** *“With Wildman's fanaticism was joined a tender care for his own safety. He had a wonderful skill in grazing the edge of treason. Such was his cunning, that though always plotting, though always known to be plotting, and though long malignantly watched by a vindictive government, he eluded every danger, and died in his bed, after having seen two generations of his accomplices die on the gallows.”*

John Wildman had a son, also called John, who took over the ownership of Beckett but had no children. Unfortunately, we have no picture of him. He too had been a Dissenter in the 33. troubles of the period and had chosen as his heir a very able young man called John Shute who lived in Essex. Why did he choose John Shute? He was a barrister from the Inner Temple and highly regarded by the Government for whom he worked as a key figure. He was also a Dissenter. Soon after John Wildman died in 1710, John Shute came to live at Beckett. Shortly afterwards this fortunate young man inherited yet another estate, this time Tofts in Little Baddow, Essex owned by Francis Barrington who, like John Wildman died childless and was also a Dissenter. He too, had chosen the young John Shute as his heir because of his integrity, quick mind and his sympathies. However, there was a condition that he should change his name to Barrington. And as if events were not extraordinary enough, John Shute also became the recipient of a newly created peerage of 34/35 Ireland. We now have John Shute Barrington living at Beckett house, the First Viscount Barrington. It's 1720 and the Barrington dynasty had begun.

But what had he inherited at Beckett ?

36/37 The old Beckett House (which resembled a Barrack Block)

38 The China House or Fishing Lodge as some call it – built around 1680

This is described in, 'English Gardens by Gloag,' as:

**Vivien:** *"One of the greatest treasures in the way of garden architecture ... set like a rare gem in the midst of flowers, with a background of dark yews."*

39                      And of course some beautiful grounds    (Pause)

And before we leave the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Barrington, I would like to share an interesting record with you. I read some delicate & damaged documents in the County Archives concerning a land dispute between Lord B and Mark Stuart Pleydell of Coleshill. In a letter that was written with ink that had flecks of gold in it and still sparkled, headed Beckett House & dated Oct 14, 1729, Lord B writes at the end of one letter;

**Vivien:** *"I return you my thanks for your present of Alder wine. It is extremely good. I have had ye pleasure to drink ye Founders health in it several times. When my wife's Orange wine is ready she designs to ask your favour of you and Mrs Pleydell to taste it. She joins with me in complimenting you."*

Now that's how the aristocracy conduct themselves during a dispute!!

40.                      We are going to rely now quite heavily on the notes & memoirs of Augusta Barrington, who was the 4<sup>th</sup> daughter of William Keppel Barrington, the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount. She was married in Shrivenham church and was a great favourite of the villagers

So we move on now to William

41.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Lord Barrington, William Wildman Shute Barrington. He was born in 1717 and became a very accomplished statesman.

He was a Politician as MP for Berwick upon Tweed

He was a Lords Commissioner of the Admiralty

He was Chancellor of the Exchequer

Secretary at War. Postmaster General

42. His reign as Viscount and Lord of the Manor was to be a long one from 1734 to 1793. Some records state that when he inherited the title of Viscount in 1734 that he went off travelling. But this is probably because he was only 17. He needed 4 years for legal maturity of 21.

We have a few stories from Augusta's notes that we felt we should really share with you about William Barrington, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount;

First of all The Ladies:

43.

**Vivien:**

*Vivien: He used to pay short annual visits to Beckett and have large parties in the old house. He used to invite the ladies at breakfast to take an airing in his coach and four, and if they declined would ring for his steward and say: "My compliments to the ladies' maids and the coach shall be ready for them if they wish to take a drive."*

And of some of the features around the estate we have the following note:

44.

*Vivien: "He left his mark at Beckett with stables at a most inconvenient distance from the house, a stone bridge built on such low arches that it was impossible to pass under in any boat, and a beautiful raised walk known as "the old Lord's Terrace."*

When he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, he produced before dinner one evening in Cavendish Square, London, a bank bill for £10,000 as a curiosity. When dinner was announced the note had disappeared. Lord Barrington remarked very coolly;

*Vivien: "Ladies and Gentlemen, you may go to dinner, but unless that note is found I must leave the country tonight. A second search was made and the bill was soon found, slipped under some books, let us hope accidentally."*

As Secretary at War an officer who felt considerably aggrieved at not being promoted, once forced his way into Lord Barrington's private room at the War Office and demanded instant personal satisfaction. Lord Barrington whose temper seems to have been most imperturbable replied very quietly;

**Vivien:** *"My dear Sir, if I fought a duel with every officer in His Majesty's Service who considered himself neglected or ill-used, I would not be here to wish you a very good morning and bowed him out."*

45 We also have from the reign of William, a Disbursement Book that is held by the Barrington Heritage Centre in the Military College Library. Here are some pictures of the pages.

46. It runs from 1766 to his death in 1793 and lists the expenditure of the estate. It's a marvellous source of names - mostly local people who either worked for the estate or supplied goods to it. It shows also that William was a generous man and gave a lot of money to local causes. From it we have been able to discover many facts that were unknown, for instance, that the Barrington Arms Public House was in existence under that name in 1766 and the landlady was Martha Stallard.

47. William's long public service did not go unnoticed and the King wrote him a personal letter in 1778 granting him a pension of £2000 per annum (a huge sum).

48. William had no surviving children from his marriage to Mary Lovell and it was his brother John who would provide the next heirs. John was a military man and at his death held the rank of Major General.

49. He married Elizabeth Vassal who was the daughter of Florentius Vassal from Jamaica and there was a rumour that Elizabeth was a Creole, the product of a mixed race relationship. As you can see, she was a beautiful woman. It was her children that would provide Viscounts 3, 4 and 5.

But before that let us look briefly at other notable Barringtons, namely the 3 other brothers of William the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount.

50. Daines Barrington. In his legal career he became a Welsh Judge. He was also described as being a great Naturalist and took a lot of interest in matters to do with the countryside. He was also known for his stubbornness. He never married.

51. Samuel Barrington, who distinguished himself as a naval officer. He became a Lieutenant at the age of 15, A Commander at 17, a Post Captain by 20 and went on to become an Admiral. He would almost certainly have known a young Horatio Nelson. One of his most notable feats was to capture the French warship 'Count de Florentine' and the white ensign from that ship hung in Shrivenham church for many years, until it just basically fell to pieces. There is a marble monument there now.

In his naval career he was well thought of and respected by his peers. It was said of him that:

*Vivien: He was a most hospitable man and a wonderfully kind friend to all his Captains. His house in Harley Street, London, was a sort of free club to them, places being laid at his dinner-table whether he dined at home or not, for anyone who wrote his name before a fixed hour on a slate in the hall.'*

He was a completely different character to his brother Daines. In her memoirs, Augusta Barrington relates a story that involved her grandfather, George Barrington, (who would become the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount) Daines and Samuel Barrington.

*Vivien: George was once stopped by a Highwayman on Hounslow Heath and robbed of his watch and 20 guineas. He was on his way to Beckett where a family party was assembled and naturally related his grievance. His uncle Daines, an extremely obstinate man, had a theory that highwaymen never attacked a carriage in the open, so he said, "It was in the lanes George."*

*"No," said George, "it was on the Heath."*

*The judge repeated his assertion several times and at last said rather angrily, "Very well, as you choose to contradict me like that, I will disinherit you."*

*“Never mind, my boy,” said the old Admiral, Samuel, who was also present, “I’ll make it up to you.” Sure enough, when they died, it was found that Daines had altered his Will and left all his fortune to the Prices; the Admiral equally kept his word and made George his heir.*

52.

Another of the brothers was Shute Barrington, who became the Right Rev Hon Shute Barrington. He was Bishop of Durham and Salisbury. He was a very wealthy and influential man. He left in his Will £30,000 in order to build a new Mansion House at Beckett. (By the way, we have recently met a descendant of the Bishop who has further Barrington information for us).

So back to our Barrington lineage

53. William & Richard Barrington, who became the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Viscounts were considered to be the ‘Black Sheep,’ of the family. At the moment we don’t know just why this was so and what they had done to merit it. Such was the influence of William the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount, that they were virtually erased from the aristocratic record. In her notes, Augusta states when talking of Bishop Shute Barrington that;

**Vivien:** *‘In the year 1793, shortly after his translation, his eldest brother (William 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount) with much well-merited distrust of the General’s very disreputable eldest sons, that he disinherited them and appointed the Bishop sole and responsible Trustee of the whole property with the proviso only that no descendant of the Barringtons should be left to want.’*

54. This meant that although William and Richard bore the titles Viscount Barrington, they had no say at all in the running of the Barrington estates, including Beckett. Both brothers died childless and with the death of Richard in 1814, the Trust terminated. Bishop Barrington had appointed his nephew Mr William (Barrington) Price as Resident Agent in charge of Beckett, but very little was done for the property during those 20 years and consequently it was noted that;

**Vivien:** *‘the farms and cottages were all out of repair and there was not a shilling of ready money.’*

55. So after this 20 year period of neglect and uncertainty, it was George, another son of Major General John Barrington, who became the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount in 1814.



He was a Clergyman of the Church of England. But, to date we have no picture of him

This probably accounts then for why the new Viscount appointed a new Estate Manager at Beckett by the name of George Merryweather, who arrived in April 1815. He immediately set about gathering information on tenants, condition and valuations. He made detailed lists of all the cottages and properties in the area, rents due etc. He also produced a very detailed account of all the farms that belonged to the estate, Sand Hill Farm, Stallpits, Stainswick, Galleyhearns, Cowleaze, Manor Farm & Beckett Home at Watchfield. He detailed the condition that they were in and what could be done to improve them.

56. George Merryweather was only there as Estate Manager until 1821 when the job was taken over by Robert Dawson who had come from Essex, no doubt a contact of the Barrington estate at Tofts. Robert Dawson describes for us conditions at Beckett when he writes;

*Vivien: 'We lived in the old mansion, in which there were rooms sixteen feet high and large in proportion. There were beautiful shrubberies, a long water walk, two islands in the broad part of the water, and beautiful swans that used to follow us when we were in the boat, and sometimes they would have a brood of cygnets following them. Faringdon was our post town, and a boy on a donkey used to come every morning with the post bag, which was locked and return with it in the afternoon. It was about four miles to Faringdon. From the lawn there was a lovely view of the White Horse. Oh ! it was a charming place.'*

Robert Dawson left Beckett in 1825 and went to Australia.

Although we have no picture of any sort of the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount, George Barrington, we do have a rather heart-warming story about him and his wife Elizabeth Adair. Elizabeth had a pretty face but a deformed body. When George Barrington asked her

father Robert Adair, an army surgeon, for her hand in marriage, Adair told Barrington that he felt it was his duty to dissuade him from the alliance adding that;

*Vivien: under the circumstances of both his brothers being disinherited and childless it was extremely important to him to have an heir, and as a medical man, he thought it extremely unlikely that his daughter would have a family owing to her deformity. Barrington said that his attachment was far too strong to be over-ruled by such reasoning. Mr Adair having delivered his conscience was in no way averse and the marriage took place in 1788 – and there were 15 children. And seldom were so many tall, handsome brothers and sisters seen in one family.*

It was George Barrington (5<sup>th</sup> Viscount) who had been preparing for the new Mansion and had an architect by the name of William Atkinson draw up some plans. He seems to have gone to considerable efforts to get the project underway. As early as 1816/17 he was employing local builders John & George Knapp to take down the remains of the ancient house in preparation for the new one. He's noted as paying for gunpowder to blast new stone from the quarry. He's also sending and receiving mail by the Post Coach from London, concerning plans for the new Mansion.

At the end of his life, George Barrington had travelled to Italy where he became seriously ill and died in Rome in 1829.

[57, 58, 59](#)

It was George's eldest son, William Keppel Barrington who succeeded the title and became the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount in 1829. Earlier he had married Jane Elizabeth Liddell, daughter of the 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Ravensworth. ([Go thro the slides to 59](#))

Augusta Barrington tells us something of the start of their married life.

*Vivien: 'My father and mother were married on the 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1823 in London. Directly after the marriage they started for Shrivenham in an open carriage posting the whole way, 73 miles. They did not go to Beckett or Shrivenham House (Fangs as it was then called) but to a picturesque gabled house opposite the Vicarage, called Courtney Cottage. Mother wore a pretty white silk pelisse trimmed with swansdown and I have often heard her describe her consternation when she discovered that the blue lining of the new carriage had come off on*

*the new dress and completely spoiled it. The spring was cold and backward and it was nearly dark when they arrived, but she noticed with pleasure the gay appearance of the flower beds in the little garden. The next morning much to her disappointment she found that the flowers were all dead. An old lady, Mrs Hare, had ransacked all the cottage gardens to fill the beds with cut flowers in honour of the bride, a well-meant attention but they would have been better bestowed in the house.'*

60. So, they posted to a picturesque gabled house opposite the Vicarage called Courtney Cottage. Not Elm Tree House.

61.

One of the first tasks that William set himself was to get the building of the new Beckett House underway. The money had been provided by a legacy from Shute Barrington, the Bishop, who had left him £30,000 for the project.

62.

The original plans drawn up by William Atkinson had been rejected. The family members considered his drawings to be ugly. On a visit to Beckett, William Barrington's Father-in-Law, Lord Ravensworth, said of Atkinson's plans and the old House;

*Vivien: 'Pull down the house and chuck it into the water and that will get rid of two damned ugly things at once.'*

So who did design it ? William Barrington consulted his wife's brother, the Hon Thomas Liddell, who George Barrington described as,

*Vivien 'A man of singularly good taste, who at once saw that, with caution, a sound deal might be made of the place. Mr Liddell had great natural abilities as an Architect, and kindly undertook to design plans for the erection of an Elizabethan House.'*

The site chosen was the flower garden of the old house called 'The Gem' which was immediately to the south of the old house. The first or Foundation stone was carefully laid by a young lad called George who was 5 years and 8 months old. He was William's first son who grew up to become the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount. In his later years, George Barrington described his laying of the Foundation stone in October 1829, assisted by the builders who constantly flattered him about the importance of his work. He described the location of the stone;

*Vivien: 'the stone will be found at the end of the cellar passage in the eastern wall, close to the flag stone floor duly dated.'*

We just couldn't resist, we had to go and see if we could find this stone. So with the kind co-operation of the military, we were invited to visit Beckett House and see if we could find the said stone. As we went into the cellar we followed George Barrington's description of it's location to the letter and there it was...

63.

64. Whilst the new house was being built, William Barrington and his family stayed at Fangs, sorry Shrivenham House. When they left to move into the new Beckett House 3 years later, Dowager Elizabeth Barrington, widow of George the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount, moved in. But because the house was in a bad state of repair, she spent £4000 on renovating it.

And as a memorial to the project, she put her mark on it.

65.

66. So Lord Viscount Barrington and his family moved in to the new Beckett House in 1832. But it wasn't finished completely. Whereas the complete outer shell of the building was finished, only the inner rooms in the western part were habitable. The rest would not be fully completed until 1855.

William Keppel Barrington fulfilled his social obligations that were befitting his status. He was Chairman of the Berkshire Quarter Session Law Courts for 36 years and was happy to open up Beckett Park to the public on special occasions. These events were always reported on by the local newspaper and were often stating;

*Vivien: "It is customary for thousands of persons to be present at these Fetes."*

Then in August of 1861, the newspaper reported on;

*Vivien: " The Annual Feast, given by Lord Barrington to the school children of the parish, held at Beckett Park."*

And the Harvest Homes in the Autumn, (what we call today Harvest Festival). Then on one in particular the local newspaper reported a delightful event in September 1864;

67.

*Vivien: "The labourers and tradesmen with their wives (about 100 in number) belonging to Lord Barrington's estate, sat down to a sumptuous dinner in The Ride, which was decorated for the occasion. After dinner, lady Barrington ordered all the food that remained, of which there was an abundance, to be given to the children and the old women, who after the labourers and wives retired, occupied the seats in number about 200.*

68.

Now, this not only gives us an indication of the generosity of the Barringtons, but also gives us a flavour of the emphasis on class structure of society at the time. The children and old women come after the labourers..... Acceptable then but today..?

The Servants Ball was reported in Jan 1866;

69.

*Vivien. "On new year's day, the annual Servants Ball came off at Beckett Park. Dancing started at 10pm till Midnight when supper was announced. Splendid food; a large Boars Head, Turkeys, Pheasants, Hams, Tongues, Jellies, Pastry of all kinds. Dancing resumed until the small hours..."*

William died in 1867 and the funeral took place at Shrivenham where he was interred in the family vault. The newspaper reported that the cortege went from Beckett House direct to Shrivenham Church, obviously straight up The Drive.

Lady Jane Barrington, unfortunately died as a result of an accident at the family house at Cavandish Square, London, in 1883, when she sadly, fell down the stairs. She too was interred at Shrivenham.

70. It was the a now grown up George Barrington who inherited the Viscountcy in 1867, many years after he first laid that Foundation Stone as a little boy. He was MP for the constituency of Eye in 1866 - 80 and married to Isabel Morrith. In September 1882, he wrote a 30 page document and we have a copy of that courtesy of Anthony Alderson who is with us this evening. In it he wrote about Beckett and his family. He described all the rooms in the new house, the furniture, the paintings, the décor, some of which is in extraordinary detail.

71. He was created Baron Shute in the 1880's, his full title being Baron Shute of Beckett in the County of Berkshire. This entitled him to an automatic seat in the House of Lords.

During his tenure of Beckett the Beckett Horticultural & Cottage Garden Society was formed and its first Show was held in 1877. The shows became a great attraction and were covered in great detail by the Swindon Advertiser newspaper. One article in particular is worthy of note with regard to the grounds at Beckett. On Mon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept, 1878, it reported;

*Vivien "The noble owner (Lord B) not only threw open that part where the show was held, but invited the visitors to ramble at leisure through the magnificent gardens, and this was a treat most thoroughly enjoyed by all. The splendid foliage of the stately trees, the shady walks, the beautiful lake, and the magnificent flower beds, are such that can be rarely seen by the general public. One of the chief features of attraction was the 'Carpet Garden' the beds are simple perfection. Their design, their colours, their regularity are marvellous. Not a leaf is wanting, not a sprig is out of place, and the utmost credit is due to the gardener, Mr Meades.*

But....this was a 'Golden Age' coming to an end....

Like the previous Viscount he served the community with justice as Chairman of the Faringdon Bench of Magistrates. But his life came to a sudden end whilst on a Shooting Party at Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire in 1886.

His body was brought back to Beckett and his funeral was held at Shrivenham. During a service that was held the next day, the Vicar said of him;

*Vivien: Before leaving this pulpit I must again ask for your prayers on behalf of the afflicted family of the late Lord Barrington, our dearest squire, whom God was pleased to call away yesterday evening, and of which sad event intelligence was received this morning. No one, perhaps knows better than myself what a kind, warm hearted, friend this parish has lost, for never was a case of need or distress ever brought to his notice without liberal and ready help being freely offered.*

We are now entering a time of great change, not only for Beckett but for the country as a whole. The problem began in the early 1870s with a huge decline in agricultural incomes caused by the imports of grain from North America and meat from South America & Australasia. It was compounded also by estate land which could not be easily sold off because of being tied up by complex Wills and Trusts.

Very soon after the death of the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount, George Barrington, Lady Barrington and daughter Florence left Beckett much to the sadness of many of the villagers of Shrivenham & Watchfield. In December 1886, the Swindon Advertiser newspaper wrote an article which included the statement that;

*Vivien: 'On Monday and Tuesday a large number of villagers and tenants on the Beckett estate took farewell of Lady Barrington and Miss Florence. These ladies have endeared*

*themselves in ways innumerable on the principle contained in the sermon- on- the- mount, and the parting, was sad and affecting. The poor of the village feel they have lost kind and beneficent friends.'*

73. It was this gloomy situation that Percy Barrington, the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount had inherited. We don't actually know a great deal about him. He was married to Louisa Higgins.

74. He was an officer in the Fusilier Guards and the Sheriff of Buckinghamshire in 1864. But such was the economic situation of the estate that he could not live at Beckett, presumably for tax reasons. At a Forester's Fete dinner that took place at Shrivenham in 1888, Percy Barrington explained personally and the newspaper reporter stated that;

**Vivien:** *Before he inherited the estate and title he was aware that things were in a very complicated state, and when he came into possession he found it more complicated than he had thought. He did his best to mend matters, but the income was not nearly sufficient for anyone to live at Beckett and keep up the estate. It would not be possible for him to live there in his life, but he hoped the next generation would be able to do so. He looked upon the property with very great interest, inasmuch as a great deal of money would have to be spent upon the estate, whilst the income would not meet the expenditure.*

This meant that Beckett House itself had to be rented out in order to survive, and there were a succession of tenants; Captain Hamilton, Mr Robertson F. Bertram, Robert Whitehead. By the way, Robert Whitehead was the inventor of the Naval Torpedo. Percy died at Brackley, Northants in 1901

75. Unlike his Father, Walter Bulkeley Barrington was able to take up residence in Beckett House along with his first wife Mary Isabella and his family.

76.



He became the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount Barrington on the death of his father in 1901. Mary Isabella unfortunately died in 1903 and two years later Walter married Charlotte Birch.

77. Charlotte became something of a champion for the local people of Shrivenham. She was a great believer in traditional family values and urged all around her to recognise the importance of a local community.

78. Charlotte campaigned tirelessly for the funds to build a community building and this all came to fruition in 1925 with the official opening of this building. And of course Walter was there to support her

79. The Memorial Hall, the very building we are in this evening.

80. She was also touched by the plight of disabled men returning from the Great War of 1914 - 1918. She was instrumental in building the cottages in the Recreation Ground that were designated for the use of these ex-servicemen.

But the pressure continued on the viability of the Beckett Estate and the Barringtons. The great war had taken away many of the young men who worked on the estate farms and the young women had left service to take the place of the missing men in the fields and the factories. An act of parliament had been put in place to free large estates from the legal stranglehold of complex Wills, Trusts and Taxes.

81. So it was inevitable that the Beckett Estate would be sold off. The first attempt came in 1917. Many of the smaller estate properties such as cottages managed to attract buyers, but the bulk of the estate remained unsold.

82. There were further attempts in 1922 and 1927

But eventually the estate was sold off and Lord and Lady Barrington moved to Rickmansworth Park in Hertfordshire. But they couldn't settle there and soon came back to Shrivenham.

83. In 1933 Walter died and his funeral was attended by a huge number of local people. At the request of Lord Barrington via his Will, the local Cricket team acted as Pall Bearers in the whites.

84. I'd like to mention an interesting discovery that I made at the Heritage Centre. In a book that had most likely belonged to a former headmaster of Shrivenham school called Mr Dance, out dropped this envelope.

85. Here's one of them:

**Vivien:** *My Dear Children*

*I must write and tell you how much I appreciate the lovely wreath you sent, made of flowers from your own gardens for my dear husband's grave.*

*He was always so fond of the young people and I know how much he would have welcomed this token of your affection. His kind friend and your school master, Mr Dance, has spoken so kindly of Lord Barrington's character and qualities and I do feel nothing would please the one who has won love from us, so much as to know, that you the children of this village, are taking as an example you will follow now and in the later life, the usefulness, patriotism and love, service to others and simple faith in God, the marked characteristics of his life, you thus will be paying him the tribute he would most value. Your affectionate friend Charlotte Barrington*

Charlotte Barrington purchased back Beckett House shortly after Walter's death. All the farms had been sold off. Earlier, it had been rumoured that Beckett House would be sold and used as a school but the deal never came off. Charlotte spent a lot of money re-decorating and repairing the house, but sadly she died in 1935. The following year Beckett Park and house was sold to the War Office. I'm reliably informed that the reason the military wanted it was for an Anti-Aircraft gunnery

school, and the area was known for its clear skies. Today it is still in the hands of the military.

86. But what of the Barrington lineage.? There were two more Viscounts, William Reginald Shute Barrington and Patrick William Daines Barrington – notice the careful choice of names.

87.

With the death of Patrick in 1990, the Barony and Viscounty became extinct.

And that really is our story of Beckett & the Barringtons. Some have suggested that such a gem of a place as Beckett should not be in the hands of the military. But may we suggest that its military intervention that has preserved this jewel on our doorstep.

88 – 93

We suspect that if it were not for the military, then Beckett House would have been demolished long ago. They are preserving it for us.