

Beckett

A Jewel in the Parish of Shrivenham

A Chronicle of a little-known village



At the Eastern end of the Parish of Shrivenham, lies the area known as Beckett Park. Some writers spell it with one 'T', others with two. Personally, I prefer two as it is much more satisfying to the eye. I suspect that like myself, the local people of Watchfield and Shrivenham will have always thought of Beckett as, 'That bit of the village occupied by the Military.' It's a logical tag to give it as the entire estate has been in government hands since 1937. I also suspect that the number of people alive today who might remember the estate before this date, could be counted on one hand.

Beckett was the Manorial seat of the Barrington family; a name which occurs frequently around the neighbourhood in the form of place and street names, or even more commonly, as former owners of land and property within title and deed documents. However, the origins of Beckett go back much further and has been owned by some wealthy and influential people from as far back as the Norman

conquest. It was also a village in its own right in the mediaeval period and I suspect that it has been a settlement for millennia.

Much of our local history tends to be swallowed up under the heading of Shrivenham and I have endeavoured to correct this with regard to Watchfield. Much of the information concerning Beckett has come to light during my research on Watchfield for the publishing of the 'Watchfield Chronicle.' A limited number of hard copies were produced but the whole book is available online at <http://publications.shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk/free> for all to read and download by chapter in PDF format if so desired.

The main subject of this history is intended to be focused on general events from a local point of view. We have scant information on owners of Beckett previous to Henry Marten, barely the odd snippet. The Manor of Beckett must have always provided much business and employment to the local inhabitants and it's that information I would like to keep to the fore.

If you would like more detailed information on the various Barringtons, please see the publication by Shrivenham Heritage Society called 'Beckett & The Barringtons,' also available at the above link.

The information provided by local newspapers only deals with the 19th century. Searching entire newspapers is extremely time-consuming and so far, I have only managed to reach 1900. As I delve further into the 20th century, I will update the E-book accordingly.

I hope that producing this small history may assist and inspire future historians to dig a little further, both archaeologically and archivally.

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