



The Buckingham Society

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Highlights:

Heritage Open Days
Big Bash Society Fun
The Bartletts of Buckingham



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The Bartlett family was a powerful clan with a powerbase in the Prebend End of Buckingham. Their progress across Buckingham lasted for two hundred years starting around 1680.

Buckingham's economy did not grow at the same pace as the Bartletts' wealth and, eventually, their Buckingham branch withered as the trunk of the family tree grew fat on roots transplanted into richer soil elsewhere.

Wealth Creation

Three keys unlocked the coffers of wealth for the Bartletts: tanning, woolstapling and banking. Tanning was the cause of the Prebend End power base. Tanning was an old-standing Buckingham chemical industry that was smelly, dirty and caused appalling effluent. Gaining a surname of "Tanner" was not a subject for pride. Tanners smelled rank, not only were they involved in removing rotting flesh from animal hides, but they used "pure" in curing those hides. "Pure" was a euphemism for dog poo! Yes, Buckingham folk would scour Buckingham's streets picking up doggie droppings to keep the pits of the Prebend industry humming. After several months the exhausted poo vats were emptied straight into the nearby river Ouse.

That's why tanning took place along Hunter Street – downstream of central Buckingham. Nobody in his or her right mind would bathe in the river below a tannery; Buckingham's first bathing

station was positioned at the river's entrance into Buckingham near the Brackley Road.

Early Days

Two brothers, Thomas 1754 – 1812 and Edward 1756 – 1795 mark the end of the first phase when the Bartletts were establishing a base in Buckingham. Thomas became Bailiff (Mayor) of Buckingham in 1786. Neither lived to a great age. Most of their immediate successors died young and one wonders whether the nature of their industries down by the river caused infections to be rife. John (Jack "Ramskin") Bartlett (1763 – 1826) was the most successful of this generation. He was Bailiff three times both at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. He was successful through vertical integration of manufacture, with different family members in charge of the different processes.

Animal skins produced wool, leather, glue and finished products such as worsted cloth. The land between Hunter Street and the river saw stripping sheds, curing vats and wool-sorting buildings amassing behind proud family homes: Prebend House and what we call "Yeomanry House". Across the street the "Town Mill" run by William King and family changed from milling corn to fulling – pummelling damp cloth covered with fuller's earth with reciprocating wooden hammers powered by the water wheel below. Fulling turned open weave into a more densely packed

warm, worsted type of cloth. The Bartlett houses looked across to the Old Churchyard and ... the Bartlett tombs. The main group of tombs next to Hunter Street are being renovated in August 2005 thanks to a Buckingham Society initiative led by Gill Jones and supported by funds from Bartlett descendents.



Prebend House, Hunter Street

Catching Religion And The Ire Of The Marquess

Buckingham's Parish Church moved from its ancient "Prebend" land after the catastrophic collapse of the spire and the new classical building was consecrated on Castle Hill in 1781. Buckingham became torn between the established church and modern, evangelical movements.

The upright Bartlett family found the preaching style of the Reverend Thomas Scott of Gawcott much to their liking. Not only did the Scotts and Bartletts worship together, but they grew so close that Ann Bartlett (1789- c.1825, daughter of Edward) married Benjamin, the brother of Thomas Scott. The Reverend Thomas Scott was close to Methodism. Take a look at Gawcott Parish Church, which he designed himself and built with money from rich subscribers – it was no accident that Edward Bartlett laid

its foundation stone. However, the corpulent, hedonistic Marquess of Buckingham whose pocket held the Gawcott living, got annoyed with his turbulent priest who preached against excessive eating, drinking and gambling. Thomas Scott was translated to Wappenham and the Bartletts were frozen from some echelons of Buckingham Society.

Fire, Fire!

The Bartletts were fortunate where they worked and lived, for the Great Fire of 1725 stopped at School Lane touching nothing in Prebend End. Where other Buckingham families had to start afresh, the Bartletts continued their expansion unchecked.. However, early on Thursday morning, 6th May 1816 around 8 am, sparks flew from a malfunctioning engine used by Ann Bartlett in her tanning business in Prebend End. She needed tree bark to provide dye for the leather. Unfortunately, the sparks ignited a pile of bark.

Fortunately for the Bartletts and Buckingham town, two factors combined to prevent a second Great Fire: the burghers had bought no fewer than five fire tenders and it was a Fair Day. Fair traders rushed down the gentle slope from Bristle Hill to Hunter Street hauling the tenders behind them. The bark was lost and so were two cottages belonging to tanners but the rest of town was safe.

*Coming in the next issue of
The Buckingham Society Magazine:-
The Bartletts From Buckingham:
Banking, Wharf mongering and the
Diaspora of the Bartletts.*