



## **Beckett and The Barringtons**

Researched and collated by Neil B. Maw and Vivien

Moss



Beckett Park – with Beckett House in the centre and the military college buildings  
above

Photo by Neil B. Maw

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## The Manorial Descent of Beckett

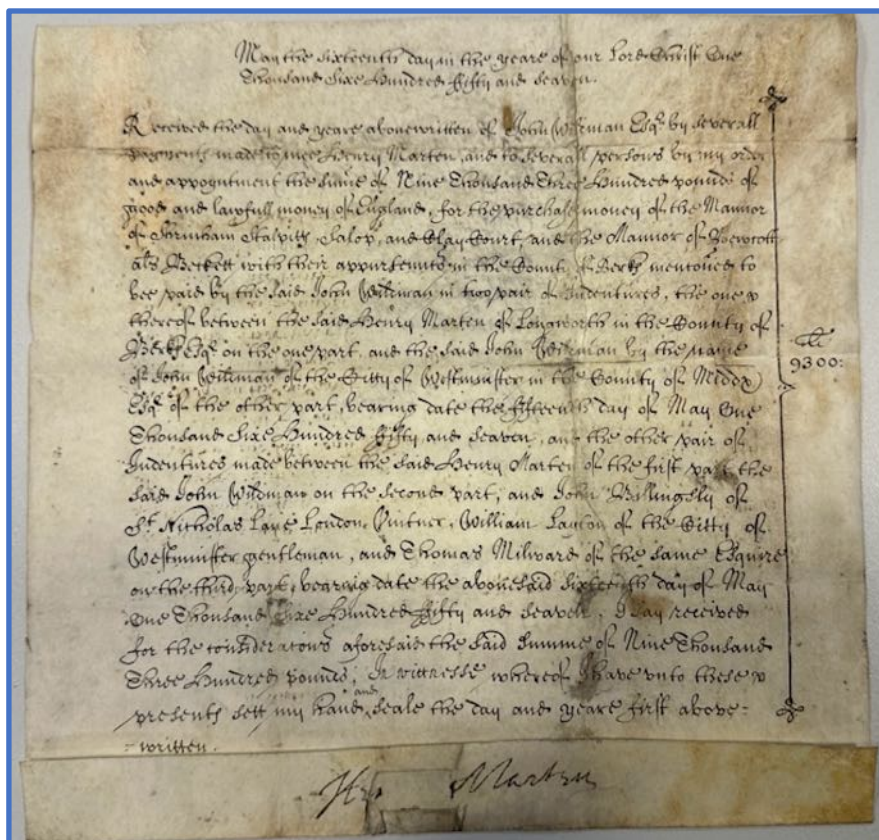
Name	Source	Approx year
2 Manors	Domesday Book	1086
King John (1166-1216)	Known written Mandate	1204
John de Beckett	Lord Bishop of Sarum archive	1395
The Shottesbrooks	Buys Beckett in 1424 ( <i>VCH Vol 4</i> )	1424
John Rogers	Numerous legal docs	1429
The Essex's	Numerous legal docs	1518
Sir Henry Unton	Manor Ct Docs RBA. D/EEL/M32-59	1580
Unton's wife Dorothy	Manor Ct Docs RBA. D/EEL/M43	1634
Henry Marten (Snr - Jnr)	Manor Ct Docs RBA. D/EEL/M32-59	1635
John Wildman (Snr - Jnr)	Royal Berkshire Archives D/EZ/7/59	1657
John Shute (1 <sup>st</sup> Lord Barrington)	Extensively documented	1708

This point onwards in the Manorial descent of Beckett, will form the basis for this publication of *'Beckett and the Barringtons.'* But first, we would like to make clear the events of how the manor passed from Unton through to Wildman.

At the latter part of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the manor court records listed above, show that Sir Henry Unton held the manors of Shrivenham Salop, Stallpits, Cleycourt and Beckett. He was also the Lord of the Shrivenham Hundred. On his death in 1596, the manors were held by his wife Dorothy. Upon her death in 1634, the manors were purchased by Henry Marten the lawyer. They passed to his son Henry upon his death in 1641. The son Henry is often referred to by historians as *'Harry,'* to distinguish the two, and was the owner of Beckett when the fighting started in the Civil Wars. By the early 1650s it is well documented that he was running out of money and borrowed much.



It is at this point of time in history that another piece of misinformation should be clarified. There are many quotes that Beckett was sold in 1652 to Sir George Pratt of Coleshill. This confusion was caused by a loan of £2000 that Henry Marten borrowed from Sir George in 1652 (RBA. D/EPB/T1/T1A Indenture dated 13<sup>th</sup> December 1652). This was subsequently repaid as recorded by an Acquittance (discharge of debt) of £9300 paid by John Wildman (see below) for all the Manors owned by Henry Marten and to his creditors. (RBA. D/EZ7/59 - doc dated 16<sup>th</sup> May 1657 - below). Also, the Royal Berkshire Archives (RBA) Manor Court records list Henry Marten as Lord until 18<sup>th</sup> December 1656. Then listed as Lords were Sir John Pettus and Thomas Husey, possibly caretakers or trustees, brought about by Harry Marten becoming bankrupt. At 4<sup>th</sup> June 1657 John Wildman is recorded as the Lord. (D/EEL/M43). Henry Marten (snr) built and owned property in Longworth and close to that property is the Manor of Barcote that Harry bought from Sir William Owen. This property is often confused with Beckett but the two have no connection.

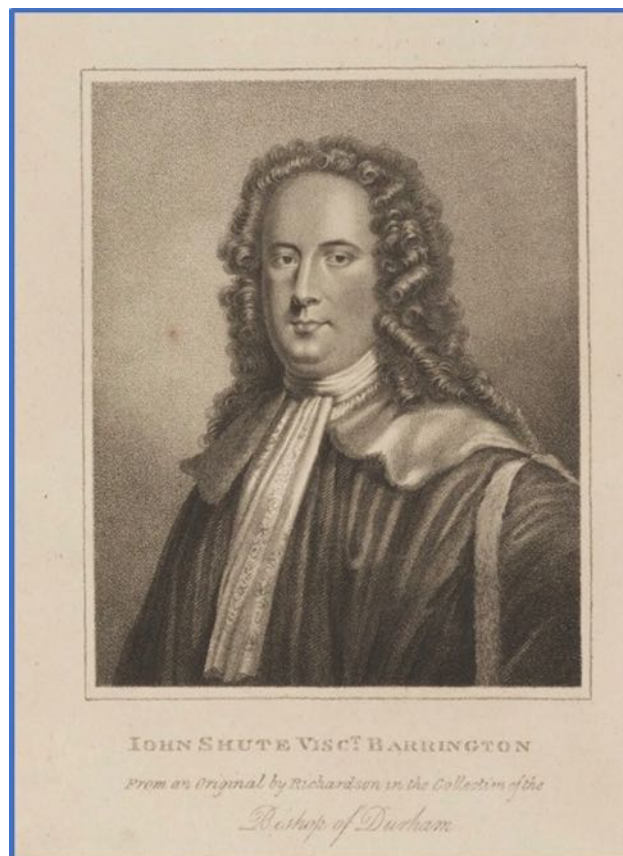


The civil wars of the 17<sup>th</sup> century must have created chaos around the country, and one area in particular, record keeping, seems to have suffered badly. Not far from Beckett there is documentary evidence of the fighting at Faringdon. It is often quoted that Beckett House belonging to Henry Marten was ransacked by royalist forces, but it is likely that this is not true. The only reference discovered is from the Journal of Sir Samuel Luke who was an intelligence gatherer for the Earl of Essex during the wars of 1642 – 1644. Within a sentence he wrote, *'that within these 10 dayes they have plundered one Mr Martin's howse knight of the shire for the county of Berkes and have not left soe much as an iron barr in the windows.'* The note is dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 1642/3. A footnote made by I.G. Philip who transcribed the journal, stated that, *'Henry Marten, the regicide, M.P. for Berks, lived at Beckett, Shrivenham.'* Samuel Luke is referring to both Henry's within those statements. Sir Henry Marten senior, died in 1641. The Marten's owned a large house at Longworth, just six miles from Faringdon that was described as their principal house. It is therefore very likely that this incident refers to Longworth House rather than Beckett. Incidentally, the same is the case for St Andrew's church at nearby Shrivenham, supposedly being extensively damaged. We have yet to discover a single piece of evidence to suggest that it is accurate. Therefore, until such evidence is discovered we will discount those claims.



## The old Beckett House

When John Shute inherited Beckett from John Wildman (jnr) in 1710, we do not know whether he came to live there immediately. As an MP it is likely that he would have continued to stay in London. Wildman's Will makes no mention of his wife whom we assume had died before the date of the Will in 1707. However, when John Shute did move in to begin what would become the Barrington dynasty, we have no description of the house he would inhabit. (Below - John Shute - Viscount Barrington (1<sup>st</sup>) courtesy of National Portrait Gallery D14087).



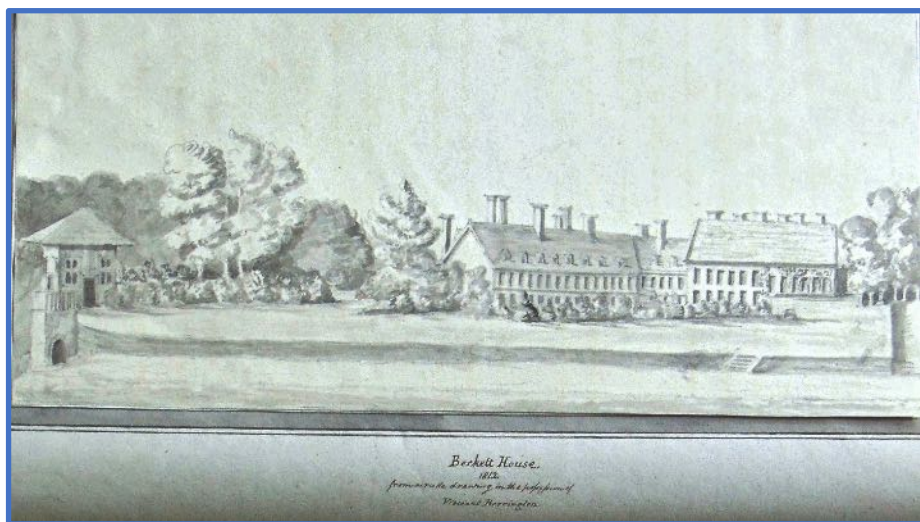
The nearest we have is from a document dated 1722 within Berkshire County Archive  
Ref: (E/EEL/35/17)

*'The Capital messuage Becket being a very large house situated on a dry soil containing 23 rooms, besides closets, 8 garrets, vaults, cellars, and offices of all kinds, as pastry, bakehouse, bolting house, brewhouse, washhouse, laundry, still house, apple loft, dairy etc with all convenient outhouses, as stables, a large and handsome barn, etc with the several courts, gardens and orchards, large dovecote, large fish pond of an acre, summerhouse being a cubed 24 feet built by Inigo Jones. The gardens containing 15 or 16 acres of ground most of it a kindly fruit, full sand. About 8 or 9 of the said acres being enclosed with a stone wall of 5775 feet or 350 poles, well planted with all kinds of fruit of the best sort. The fruit noted for its kindly taste. Grapes never fail in any year.*

*NB. Several parts of the garden and ground lying next the house have surprising echoes. 320 poles make a mile.'*

The description above would suggest the house being of a more compact nature rather than a long, range type of building as depicted in the picture below. This watercolour is marked as, '*copied by Mary Elizabeth Barrington, Beckett October 1856.*' She was the Niece of William Keppel Barrington the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount. Unfortunately, we do not know when the original was painted. The second picture below, although bearing the date of 1812, is also a copy of another picture. The note on it states that it is based on a rude sketch belonging to Lord Barrington, so we can accurately state that the view of the house must be pre-1793 the year William Barrington the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount, died. Both views are with the artist located in the south looking north. The watercolour also depicts the pigeon house that was still in use in 1818. The other shows the Fishing House, or more popularly known today as the China House. (Both courtesy of Antony Alderson).





The third picture below was discovered in the Barrington Collection documents in the British Library (*ADD MS 73759*). The sketch is not dated nor is there any clue as to the artist. It is quite a crude sketch, but closer examination makes it possible that it is a depiction of the occupied part of Beckett House in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. Examination of an inventory and valuation commissioned in 1754 by William Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount), also ties up well with the sketch below (*See SHS Cat No N1514*). The formal entrance to the house was from the north and is shown below by a section cut and expanded

from the Beckett Estate Map of 1815. (Below - the red dot is the house entrance and the blue square the Fishing House).



If this interpretation is accurate then it strongly suggests that the long-range part of the building as shown in the first two sketches above may not have been used for a considerable period. This would account for the various references made by George Merryweather in his financial accounts made during his tenure as Estate Steward 1815 - 1821 (SHS N703). In April 1816 he paid Thomas Haines £41 for taking down the woodwork of the antient part of Beckett House. He was most irritated in June of the same year, for having to pay tax for the 'vacant part of Beckett House.' In May 1817 he



recorded that he paid local Masons for closing up, '70 windows in the uninhabited parts of Beckett House,' to avoid window tax and before it was decided to take it down.

Sanderson Miller of Radway is described by some historians as a Gentleman Architect. He was born in 1716 and died in 1780. Most of his important work was carried out during his younger years and we are fortunate that he kept detailed diaries of his activities up to 1756. There was also published in 1910 a compilation of the letters sent to Sanderson Miller called, 'An Eighteenth-Century Correspondence,' edited by Lilian Dickins and Mary Stanton, in which several of William Barrington's letters are listed. This book is available to read and study online at the Internet Archive.

William Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount) clearly had something in mind about his house at Beckett. In 1754 he commissioned an inventory and valuation of the buildings, household goods, furniture and plate that he owned there. (BL ADD MS 73763) However, he may have done that simply for insurance purposes. But just over a year later, Sanderson Miller recorded that he visited Beckett in order to draw up plans for new rooms for Lord Barrington. Yet we have no evidence that any alterations or additions were carried out at that time.

In June 1766, William Barrington wrote to Miller from his home in London, "I shall be at Beckett all next week and I most cordially wish it may be convenient and agreeable for you to meet me there. Besides the pleasure I always have in seeing you I am really in great want of your assistance. My Stables will be finished by the Autumn, (below) but they cannot be well finished without you, and I have a new plan to communicate with relation to my House."



The Stables to which William Barrington alluded are the ones that were located outside the park area, just off the main road. What is left of the stable block itself has been converted into houses. But to what does he allude with his comments about his house? On his way to Beckett in September 1766, he wrote to Sanderson Miller, *“I am very thankful for your kind intentions of coming to Beckett, where you will be always received with the utmost cordiality and pleasure. My brother Daines I expect to find there tomorrow.”* He continued, *“My Works go on according to the admirable Plan settled by you, but not as fast as I could wish, however my new rooms and passages are fitting up and I expect to have full use of them next summer.”*



We also learn from the same source that Sanderson Miller designed a new door for Beckett House when Barrington writes, *“Many thanks, my dear friend, for your Packett which contains everything I want relative to the door ... I shall never see any man enter this door with more real pleasure than the ingenious worthy architect who has kindly furnished me with a plan of it.”*

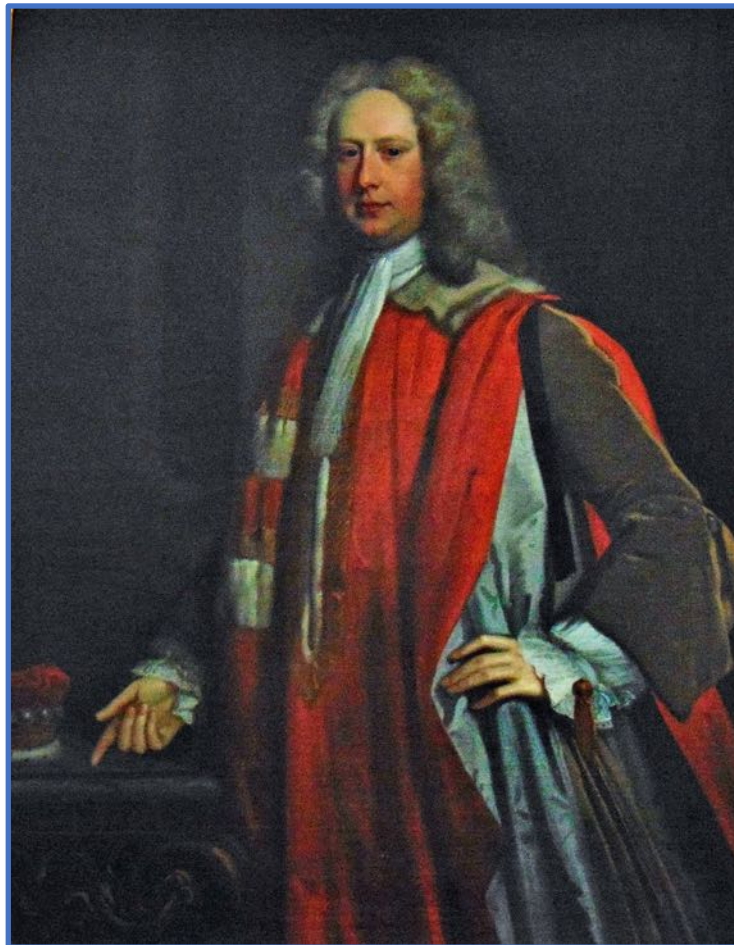
From this we can update our understanding of the Beckett Estate. The original stable block was very close to the old house and was in a poor state of repair. William Barrington decided to build a more modern and larger block and we now know that he did this in 1766. Even in 1815, George Merryweather the estate Steward was referring to them as the '*New Stables.*' We also know now that he made alterations to Beckett House, or rather a part of it, using the designs drawn up for him by Sanderson Miller. It is likely at this date that William also built the "*the old Lord's Terrace*" that crossed the narrowing in the ornamental lake. (See photo below.)



The old house was finally demolished in 1829 when the erection of the new house was started.

## John Shute Lord Viscount Barrington (1<sup>st</sup>) 1678 – 1734

The first Viscount Barrington, English lawyer and theologian, was born in 1678 to Elizabeth and Benjamin Shute, thought to be living at Theobalds House in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, in the days before this significant and stately home was demolished before the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. John was their third and youngest son. Benjamin was a merchant and his father, Samuel, is described in the Barrington and Newdigate Family Tree as being the Sheriff of London in 1641. John's mother was the daughter of the eminent divine the Rev. Joseph Caryl who sought to promote the status of the Dissenters in England. The Shute family seems to have been extensively connected with the Dissenters which then formed about a quarter of England's population and were very active in Hertfordshire and Essex. (Below – courtesy of Antony Alderson).





The "*Congregational Magazine*" for the year 1829, published by Holdsworth and Ball gives a wealth of insight from the information it supplies, "*At the age of sixteen, Mr Shute was sent to the University of Utrecht, where he distinguished himself greatly by his academical exercises, which have not only been printed but have been cited with great commendation by some eminent writers on the Civil Law. After passing four years at Utrecht, he returned to England, and applied himself with great diligence to the study of the common law at the Inner Temple. In 1701 he began to write in favour of the Protestant Dissenters, to which body he belonged.*"

By this time his reputation as an able lawyer and his considerable influence with the Dissenters was widely recognised. He was asked to participate in the discussions in Scotland leading to the Union of England and Scotland in 1707. It was felt that his influence with the Dissenters in England would help persuade the Presbyterians in Scotland without whom the Union could not take place. Soon after his return to England in 1708, he was appointed one of the Commissioners of the Customs. In his Parliamentary career as MP for Berwick-on-Tweed John Shute would have met with fellow Dissenter, Sir Francis Barrington of Tofts in Essex, also a lawyer and politician, who was very impressed by John's eloquence, his clear mind and his integrity. He was in addition, a cousin of John's mother. Not having an heir to his estate, he decided to leave it to this distant relative on condition that he took on the name Barrington. About the same time another Dissenter, Sir John Wildman (jnr) of Beckett Hall, Shrivenham made a similar decision. He too was very wealthy and engaged in law in London. In addition, he did not have an heir and like Sir Francis Barrington heartily approved of John Shute's abilities and sense of responsibility together with his religious views and he made John his heir.

In 1710 John Shute inherited Beckett and made it his seat. He continued his Parliamentary career and went on with his theological writings which demonstrated his exceptionally clear mind. Within a year the fortunate John Shute also inherited Sir Francis Barrington's estate at Tofts. The Deed Poll dated 1716 shows that he was then Mr John Shute Barrington of Beckett Hall in Shrivenham. If these events were not extraordinary enough, in the following year 1717 John became the recipient of a newly

created peerage of Ireland when he was honoured with the personal confidence of His Majesty King George I. John Shute Barrington became Baron Barrington of Newcastle in the county of Limerick and Viscount Barrington of Ardglass in the county of Down.

However, there followed a very difficult period for him concerning the Harburgh lottery, which was one of several bubble speculations at the time. George I and the Elector of Hanover had agreed that it would be beneficial for trade to enlarge the small port of Harburgh. John's role was to obtain Parliamentary approval for a lottery to raise the funds needed for the construction of the port. Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister, said it would be imprudent and illegal. The lottery went ahead and somehow more money went into the pockets of the shareholders than was expected. In his letter to King George I, dated March 1722 it was clear that he had been overruled by his team of managers. When the business was brought before the Commons the lottery was condemned as fraudulent and Viscount Barrington was severely censured, some said unjustly, by Parliament. He lost his seat and that was the end of his career in Parliament. It has been suggested by descendants of Barrington, that family records show that he acted honourably by sacrificing his reputation to save that of a member of the Royal Family. However, no such records have ever been seen in the public domain that might give credence to the claim.

In 1725 the Viscount published his principal work, "*Miscellanea Sacra*" later amended and reprinted by his son Bishop Shute Barrington.

The European Magazine printed an extract from the London Daily Post, dated 25<sup>th</sup> December 1734. In a letter from Shrivenham in Berks, it is said of Lord Barrington, *he had not been right well since he fell out of his chaise when at Berwick; he had something of a dropsy and an asthma, but was on horseback in the fields on Wednesday before he died; on Thursday he ate a very hearty dinner, and at night played cards; about ten he was seized with a chilness and had like to have been carried off with fainting fits; on Saturday morning early he died.*



The Viscount was interred in Shrivenham Church at 10pm on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. An account of the funeral was printed in the Ipswich Journal on Saturday 28 December 1734. Extract from a Letter from Shrivenham in Berks. *“Shrivenham in Berks, Dec 28, Last Night the Lord Barrington was buried here; he had no Supporters to his Pall, only his Chief Tenants; and they went two and two on Horseback, in black Cloake, before the Hearse, from Beckett; the Hearse and Horses were handsomely ornamented with Escutcheons, etc. The present Lord went in the first Coach as Chief Mourner; followed by another Coach, wherein the Hon Mr Barrington (his second son), Mr Bendish, and Mr Macewan (the Dissenting Teacher) the late Lord’s Chaplain; and followed by a Mourning Coach or State, all handsomely lighted with Wax Branches and Flambeaux. All the Tenants, though they rented ever so little, had Crape Hatbands and Gloves sent them; in this Manner they came to the Church, where vast Crowds of People had gathered from all the neighbouring Villages, and though the Church is a very large one, it would scarce hold them. His Lordship was buried about Ten at Night in the Chancel, close to Sir John Wildman. We hear his Lordship had left Mr Bendish, (his brother in law) his executor; his Lady and Mr Bendish’ Guardians to his children. The Pulpit, Desk and Chancel, were all hung with Black Cloath and Escutcheons.”* *“NB. One Thing was a near remarkable at this Funeral, viz, the Bible and Common Prayer Book were both put into Mourning on this occasion.”* (Below – monument to the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount in St Andrew’s church, Shrivenham’).



## **Anne Daines, wife of the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount, John Shute Barrington**

Anne was born on 23 July 1695 to Sir William and his wife Lady Elizabeth Harris, living at St Leonards in Bristol. Sir William Daines was born in Norfolk, Virginia where his father, an Attorney, was also the owner of a tobacco plantation. Following his father's death Sir William and his wife emigrated to Bristol where his business experience gained in the colony and his knowledge of growing tobacco, coupled with his essential connections led to his appointment as Warden with the Merchant Adventurers of Bristol from 1692 - 93 and Master from 1698 - 1700. He was not only a wealthy and successful man from his mercantile trading but also very actively interested in politics. He became Mayor of Bristol from 1700 - 1701, Whig MP for Bristol 1701 - 1710 and then re-elected from 1715 -1722 when he retired due to ill health.

According to Mrs Walters who researched this family many years ago Sir William is listed as having four servants in his house, and two ships, the '*Betty*' and the '*Lyon*.'

In her childhood Anne Daines, the younger of his two daughters, would have experienced a comfortable existence with her older sister Mary. She married John Shute on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1713 at St. Benet's, Paul's Wharf, London. She became Viscountess Barrington of Ardglass on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1720 on account of her husband John having been bestowed with the Viscountcy.

Anne was named as the sole Executrix for her father's Will. It is a measure of his wealth when he left both his daughters £10,000 for their children. Anne remained a widow for 29 years following the death of her husband in 1734. In '*An Eighteenth-Century Secretary at War*,' edited by Tony Hayter, mention is made of how generous the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount was to his mother in her widowhood.

## Children of the First Viscount

Elizabeth	Born 4/10/1714. Died young - date uncertain
Francis	Born circa 1716 died 1736
William Wildman *	Became the Second Viscount. 1717 - 1793
John *	Became Major-General. C.1722 - 1764
Anne	Married Thomas Clarges. C.1725 - 1780
Daines *	Became Lawyer & Naturalist. 1727 - 1800
Sarah	Married Robert Price of Foxley. C.1728 - 1759
Samuel *	Became an Admiral. 1730 - 1800
Shute *	Became Bishop of Durham. 1734 - 1826
Mary	Born circa 1725. Died young - date uncertain

Among the children mentioned above there are those who went on to achieve notoriety in their various professions; they are marked with an asterisk and have separate entries in this Barrington history. It is unfortunate however, that there are several of whom very little is known. Research continues and hopefully more will be discovered.

## Major-General John Barrington 1720 - 1764

John Barrington was the second son of the first Viscount Barrington and his wife Anne Daines. He was born in London in 1720 and rose in the military ranks to Major-General. Little is known about his early life. However, the National Army Museum, ref NAM1959-11-22-1 gives a comprehensive account of his Army days where he distinguished himself in the Caribbean. The full entry is quoted as follows.

*“John Barrington was commissioned into the 3rd Foot Guards in 1739 and transferred to the Coldstream Guards. In 1746 he was promoted colonel and appointed aide-de-camp to King George II. On the formation of the 64<sup>th</sup> Foot in 1758 during the Seven Years War (1756-1763), Barrington became its colonel. (Below). In this portrait by Reynolds c1758) he wears a plain civilian coat over a cuirass and gorget, which indicates his military profession.*



*In 1758, despite a protest from his elder brother, William, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Barrington, the Secretary at War, Colonel Barrington was appointed second-in-command to Major-General Peregrine Hopson, in an expedition against the French West Indies. After failing to take the island of Martinique, the expedition proceeded to Guadeloupe, the richest of the French islands. Following Hopson's sudden death on 27 February 1759, command devolved to Barrington. He inherited an army weakened by sickness and frustrated by inaction, while his fleet was diverted to other duties. Knowing that he could not take the island by force, Barrington set up a blockade, cutting off its supplies. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1759 the island capitulated, and Barrington landed his force. He set up an administration, fortified the harbour and left a garrison to hold the island, before returning to England in June. On his return, Barrington transferred his colony to the 8<sup>th</sup> (or the King's) Regiment of Foot. He died in Paris in 1764."*

Stephen Brumwell in, "*Redcoats, The British Soldier and War in the Americas 1755-1763*" also pays tribute to the efforts of the officers and the bravery of the troops.

John married the beautiful Elizabeth Vassall, reputed to be a Creole, (mixed race) who was the daughter of a wealthy plantation and slave owner Joseph Vassall. John died at the age of 42, leaving three sons. The youngest, George, was only three years old. The older two, William and Richard were only six and four years old respectively. This may account for their wild, unruly behaviour for which they were disinherited as they approached their majority. They lacked a father's discipline. Elizabeth's portrait is in the National Portrait Gallery. She died in 1776. (Below. Elizabeth Vassal, wife of John Barrington, painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds).

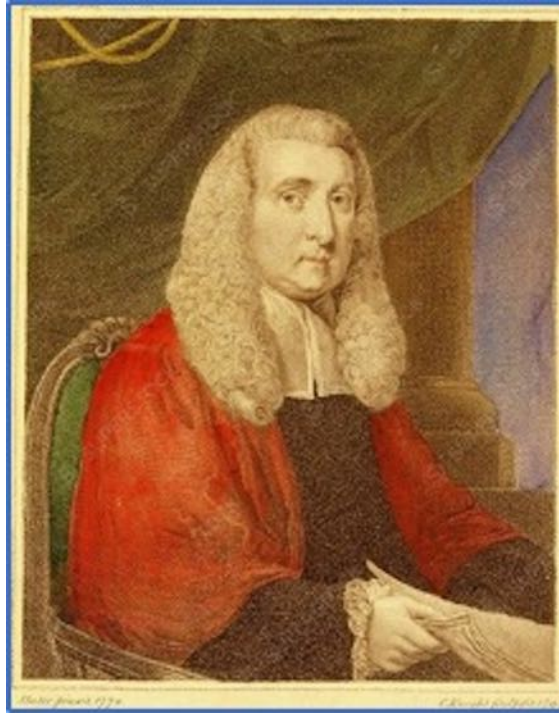


### **Children of John Barrington and Elizabeth Vassal**

William *	Became the third Viscount. 1758 - 1801
Richard *	Became the fourth Viscount. 1760 - 1814
George *	Rev. Became the fifth Viscount. 1761 - 1829
Louisa	Married Rev Tristram/Thomas Cooke. 1764 - 1840



## Daines Barrington 1727 - 1800



Daines was the third son of John Shute Barrington, the first Viscount and was born at Beckett. He matriculated at Queen's College Oxford in 1750, at an older age than many undergraduates, but did not stay to take his degree. Instead in that same year he entered the Inner Temple and completed his legal studies in 1750. He held the position of Marshal of the High Court of the Admiralty from 1751 -1753 before becoming a Judge of the Great sessions for North Wales.

Daines had a wide variety of interests in Law and Culture. Outside his work his overwhelming interests were Antiquities and the Natural World. Sir William Llewelyn Davies (1887 - 1952) in a detailed description of his work in North Wales, points to a paper Daines wrote in 1766 which earned him a high reputation among historians and constitutional antiquaries. This was, "*Observations on the Statutes, chiefly the more ancient, from Magna Carta to James I.*"

His interests in Nature led to a detailed and prolonged correspondence with the parson-naturalist Gilbert White of Selborne whose book, "*The Natural History and*

*Antiquities of Selborne*” was continuously in print. When Mozart visited London at the age of eight in 1764 this spurred Daines into looking at and writing about child geniuses. Another writing which gained wide attention was the consequence of Captain Phipps, later Lord Mulgrove, undertaking a journey of the most northern parts. Daines wrote, *“Tracts on the probability of reaching the North Pole”* in 1775. He was a member of both the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquities and served as Vice President of the latter.

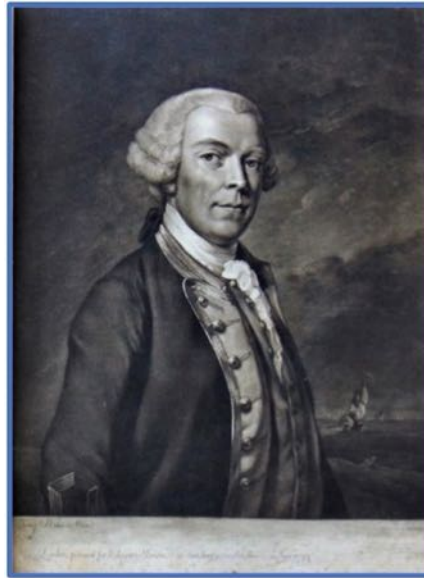
He never married and he was considered by his family, despite his wide-ranging interests, to be an obstinate and difficult man according to Lady Augusta Barrington in her Memoirs where she recounts one incident concerning her grandfather, George Barrington the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount and Daines his uncle. George was once stopped by a Highwayman on Hounslow Heath and robbed of his watch (which had belonged to his mother) and 20 guineas. He was on his way to Beckett where a family party was assembled and naturally related his grievance. His uncle Daines 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 Barrington, 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 his nephew his heir.

Daines retired from almost all his legal work in 1785 and spent his last days in London. For the last part of his life he was paralysed, *“from the legs upwards.”* He died in March 1800 and is buried in the Temple Church in London.

## Admiral Samuel Barrington 1729 – 1800



Samuel was the fourth son of the first Viscount Barrington and became Admiral of the White and a General of Marines. From an early age he wanted nothing more than to join the Navy. This he did at the age of eleven and by 1747 had been promoted to a post-captain. Two years earlier he had passed an exam for lieutenant in September 1745 at the age of sixteen. However, his certificate showed his age as twenty. (Above - painted in 1779 - courtesy of Antony Alderson).

Samuel's naval service was continuous until the end of the Seven Years War in 1763. He saw active service in the Mediterranean and at the outbreak of the Seven Years War in 1754 he was serving in the '*Achilles*' under the orders of Vice-Admiral Sir Edward Hawke. The war in Europe had not started well for the British; there were many deaths from plague and scurvy and the French dealt the English a severe blow by taking the strategic island of Menorca in 1756. The tide started to turn for the English soon after this when they discovered that the French had planned an invasion of England from Le Havre. Samuel had been serving in the Caribbean where he famously captured the "*Count de Florentine*" in 1759 off St Lucia in the West Indies. Following a two hour battle the French took serious losses and among the booty, Samuel Barrington took the Frenchman's flag that he hung in St Andrew's church, Shrivenham, for nearly two centuries after. Today, a remarkably fine white marble

flag, by Flaxman, replaces the original. The inscription under the flag reads, *'Sacred to the memory of the Honourable Samuel Barrington, Admiral of the White, & General of Marines, born Feby 15<sup>th</sup> 1730, died Augt 16<sup>th</sup> 1800. Here lies the hero, who in Glory's page wrote his fair deeds for more than half an age: here rests the Patriot, who, for England's good, each toil encountered, and each clime withstood: here rests the Christian: his the loftier claim to seize the conquest, yet renounce the fame: he when his arm St Lucia's trophies boasts, ascribes the glory to the Lord of Hosts, and when the harder task remain'd behind, the passive courage, and the will resign'd. Patient, the veteran victor yields his breath, secure in him, who conquerer'd sin and death.'*

The Whig Government from the late 1760s, under the leadership of the Duke of Newcastle, were aware of unrest in the 13 British colonies in America and were most concerned about colonial expansion in North America where the French and English were fighting for supremacy. It was important for Britain to protect her 13 colonies. Action was needed and Samuel in 1778, promoted to Rear - Admiral earlier that year, sailed to the West Indies, took and held the island of St Lucia from the French. He became Vice-Admiral in 1779 and in 1787 was appointed Admiral of the White. On his return from the West Indies, and when he had recuperated from his wounds in St Lucia, he was offered the command of the Channel Fleet but he turned it down. He flew his flag for a short time in 1790 and then retired. He died in 1800 and was interred in the family vault under the porch of St Andrew's Church, Shrivenham. (See separate chapter below).

He was said to be a sound officer who was kind to his many friends and subordinates and overall, a cheerful person. This is borne out in the Memoires of Lady Augusta Barrington writing of family memories in the late 1880s. She writes, *'He was a most hospitable man and a wonderfully kind friend to all his Captains. His house in Harley Street was a sort of free club to them, places being laid at his dinner-table whether he dined at home or not, for any who wrote his name before a fixed hour on a slate in the hall.'*

Samuel never married. A portrait of him by Joshua Reynolds hangs in the Greenwich Hospital and was donated by his younger brother Bishop Shute Barrington.

## Bishop Shute Barrington 1734 - 1826



Shute Barrington, the fifth and youngest son of the first Viscount and his wife Anne Daines, was born at Beckett on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1734. (Above by George Romney 1734 - 1802, Christ Church, University of Oxford). He was only six months old when his father died. He was educated at Eton before going on to Merton College, Oxford to further his studies. He was a strong Protestant in his religious faith, his destiny was the Church, and he was ordained either in 1755 or 1756. At this time his brother William, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount, had inherited the title and estate of Beckett and was the Secretary at War in the Tory Newcastle administration. There is a record of the Viscount making a plea to the King on behalf of his brother, Shute, then in Holy Orders. As a result, Shute was appointed Chaplain-in-ordinary to King George III in 1760 and this may well have helped him in his outstanding career for the following year he became a Canon at Christchurch Oxford. He took his degree of DCL on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1762 and was promoted to the canonry first at St Paul's and later at Windsor. He became the youngest Bishop when he took up his position at Llandaff in 1769; later becoming Bishop of Salisbury before in 1791 going to Durham where he presided for thirty-five years.

When at Salisbury he was actively involved in the repairs to the cathedral and to relieving the plight of some of the poorer clergy in the See as well as the ordinary inhabitants. In Durham, among other schools, he set up the Bishop Barrington School in Bishop Auckland which is still operative today. He energetically supported the anti-slavery movement and was a friend of William Wilberforce. He supported religious toleration of the Catholics, a group prevented from high office and the universities, and was generous to the Catholics who sought refuge from the revolution in France.

In Shute Barrington's time Durham held a unique position in Great Britain for it was a Palatinate. The Cathedral was built in 1093 to house the shrine of St Cuthbert and the adjacent Castle was the residence of the Bishop of Durham until 1836. For the holder of this remarkable title it symbolised, power, wealth, influence and faith. William de St Botolph in 1302 wrote, "*There are two Kings in England, namely, the lord King of England wearing a crown and the lord Bishop of Durham wearing a mitre in place of a crown.*"

The University of Durham Archives (GB 33 PAL) describes the area of the Palatinate as covering the land between the rivers Tyne and Tees in addition to a detached part of North Durham. This was known as the Bishopric. The Bishop of Durham was the Count Palatinate and had the rights of political power and was exempt from the power of England's legal system. He had vice-regal authority. The bishops maintained a small private army in Durham castle and used the troops at times to protect their privileges. After the Napoleonic wars, which had brought prosperity to the miners of the county of Durham, there followed widespread poverty. This unsurprisingly led to poaching from the lands of the Bishopric. Dan Jackson in, "*The Northumbrians: NE England and its people*" describes how in an unusual gesture on New Year's Day in 1812 Shute Barrington sent in an armed posse of troops to break a miners strike in Chester-Le-Street in one of the many coal mines that belonged to the Chapter and Dean of the Cathedral. Later in 1818 he used the troops again to stem the poaching of his herd of deer. From 1836 the Palatinate ceased to exist, and the Bishopric was brought under central Government control.



Bishop Shute was married twice. In February 1761 he married Lady Diana Beauclerk the only daughter of Charles the second Duke of St Albans. Sadly, she died in childbirth in May 1766 and there was no issue from this marriage. Four years later in June 1770 he married Jane, only daughter of John Guise, Bart. of Rendcomb Park in Gloucestershire. Again, there was no issue.

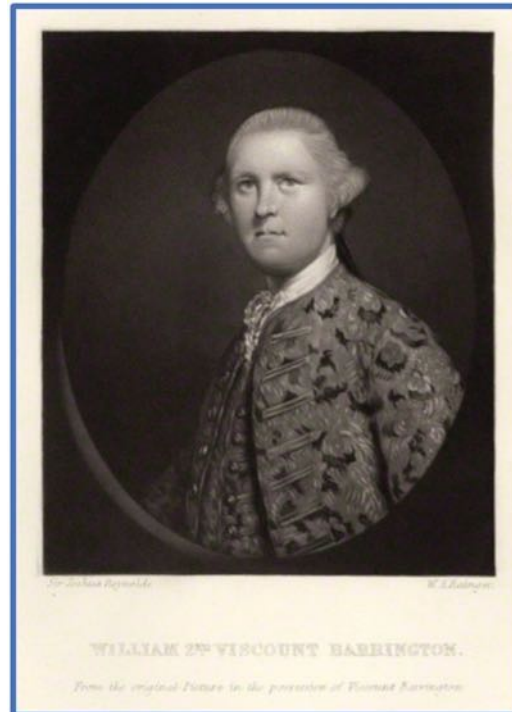
The Congregational Magazine of 1829 published an article on the character and last years of the late Bishop Shute of Durham and drew attention to the strictest regularity which prevailed in his household concerning worship, prayers, devotional reading and meditation. His passions were his devotion and his benevolence.

Shute Barrington shared his father's, the first Viscount, high regard for the sacred writings. William had published the "*Miscellanea Sacra*" and "*An Essay on the Dispensations*" in 1725 after leaving Parliament. He made a great contribution to these two volumes of well-respected work in 1770 by making large additions and corrections.

Shute Barrington was one of the three Trustees appointed by the second Viscount to manage the Beckett estate during the 20 years that it was placed in Trust (See below). He appointed Mr Barrington Price, a cousin, to oversee the running of it during that period, and that brought him to the Beckett occasionally on visits to his home in Mongewell, near Wallingford in Oxfordshire.

Bishop Shute Barrington died at his London home in Cavendish Square in March 1826 on Good Friday aged 91 as Lady Augusta Barrington recalled in her Memoires. At the time of his death, he was a visitor of Balliol College, Oxford, a trustee of the British Museum, and president of the Society for bettering the condition of the Poor, and of the School for the Indigent Blind. He left numerous legacies to charities, including £30,000 towards the cost of the building of the new house at Beckett. He is buried at Mongewell, near Wallingford in Oxfordshire, in the parish church of St John the Baptist, close to his home.

## William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup>) 1717 - 1793



William Wildman Barrington was born at Beckett on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1717 and was the eldest son of Viscount John Shute Barrington and his wife Anne Daines. (Above. A young William by Sir Joshua Reynolds). After his early education with James Graham at Dalston in Middlesex, he was sent for further studies to Geneva for three years. He returned home in 1738 after doing the “*Grand Tour*” of Europe and having then attained the age of 21, was able to take up his inheritance from his late father and became the second Viscount Barrington.

Since his title was in the Peerage of Ireland he was not entitled to a seat in the House of Lords. William had a long and distinguished career in Parliament at a time of great change in the country. He was the Whig Member of Parliament for Berwick-on-Tweed from 1740 to 1754 and then for Plymouth from 1754 - 1778. His Parliamentary speeches were admired by the Tory Prime Minister Robert Walpole who said he was, “*one of the best 20 speakers in the House of Commons, despite his slight lisp.*” William had a

very precise way of expressing himself. However, there was much antipathy between those two men.

Although opposing the Tory Government he was a positive and conscientious politician. In the early period he recognised that his strength lay not in statesmanship but more in administration and he used his skills to influence people. When he accepted the position of one of the Lords of the Admiralty in 1746 at the age of 28, he discovered early in his career that his talent for business could be used more effectively to influence. He was not a politician but a civil servant, and he made clear the principles that guided his conduct. He was offered the position of Master of the Great Wardrobe in 1754. He had long been a supporter of the Model Army which proved to be very unpopular in the Commons and was the source of many arguments, and much recrimination. He was delighted to be appointed to the prestigious post of Secretary at War for two periods 1755 - 1761 and again from 1765 -1778. In the intervening period he was Chancellor of the Exchequer for the year from May 1761 - May 1762; and Treasurer of the Navy from 1762 - 1765.

Soon after he became Secretary at War in 1755 the Seven Years War which spanned five continents and involved 40 different countries, started in 1756. At the conclusion of this bid for power, Britain was seen as one of the world's predominant powers and France's supremacy in Europe was destroyed. During this time two of William's brothers, Admiral Samuel Barrington and Major-General John Barrington were on active service in the Caribbean. The Major-General led the assault force that captured Guadeloupe and the Admiral of the White captured the French ship, "*Count de Florentine*" in 1759 off St Lucia in the West Indies.

With his meticulous attention to detail and his ability to express himself well in the House of Commons, he was highly regarded. He found favour with the Duke of Newcastle whose administration took over from Robert Walpole and is regarded as being Britain's first Prime Minister. It was noticed that William, a private and evasive man, happily survived changes of Government throughout his 38 year-long career in the Commons. Although a Whig, he approved of Tory William Pitt's view of reform.

In politics he disliked any form of nepotism and corruption but was quite comfortable to extend a helping hand to friends or family when he felt it appropriate. In a compilation of the letters sent to Sanderson Miller called, *'An Eighteenth-Century Correspondence,'* edited by Lilian Dickins and Mary Stanton, in which several of William Barrington's letters are listed it is described, *"We have it on good authority that his lordship was a 'gay dog;' however this may have been, he was certainly a most kindly and hospitable host, delighting to fill his house at Becket with large parties of his relations and the friends for whom he was always ready to use his influence in obtaining comfortable and lucrative appointments."* There is likely proof of that when Barrington made a plea on behalf of his younger brother the Reverend Shute Barrington who had taken Holy Orders. Possibly as a result, Shute Barrington became a Canon in Christchurch, Oxford and this may well have helped him in his outstanding career, for he became the youngest Bishop at the age of 35.

Within his business affairs he is portrayed by many as an intelligent and pragmatic man. In her memoirs, Augusta Barrington noted, *'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, "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.'*

His policies sought moderation. H.T. Dickinson wrote that, *"William was one of the greatest politicians in history, defending the principles of the Glorious Revolution of 1688,"* which had led to the overthrow of the Catholic King James II and the establishment of the Protestant William of Orange and the Protestant Princess Mary, daughter of King James II as joint rulers of England. This paved the way to a constitutional monarchy where the King was controlled by Parliament. It was Parliament who made the laws and this was a tremendous change for England and was also the end of the divine right of Kings.

William had been a supporter of the new Model Army but the army itself was not popular and any questions to do with the army raised in Parliament led to bitter recriminations and acrimonious arguments and he often suffered at the bitter jibes by other politicians. He strongly supported having a standing army and was aware of frequent unruliness, unrest and sometimes riots in London. This he believed could be quelled by the army. His main thrusts were to serve his King and to look after the welfare of the army. He had a very good relationship with George III who respected his views. At this time almost all the points of administration of the army were settled by the King and the Secretary of State. From the beginning of his long association with the army William found it a congenial and rewarding position. There were rough patches for example, when he felt he must take his share of the blame for losing the 13 American Colonies in 1783 after the Treaty of Paris ended the American War of Independence, although he had had no say in the policy taken.

From the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards the amount of shipping had increased, necessitating the need for a time piece to fix the sailors longitude problem at sea. John Harrison, the famous clock maker, had been working for 30 years on such an aid and in 1765 he claimed to have found the perfect method. The claim had to go before the Board of Longitude which sat in judgement. William was a member of this Board, and letters and notes by him entitled, "*A Narrative of the Proceedings*" in 1765 makes the case for adopting Harrison's invention.

In 1782 William retired from politics having been granted an unsolicited pension by the King of £2,000 a year. (Below) In his retirement it was discovered that the Accounts when he was Treasurer of the Navy, had never been made up. Accordingly, he was responsible for the shortfall of £2,915 and he promptly paid the outstanding debt. He had a good relationship with King George III who ascended the throne in 1760, visiting him at least once a week.

Lancaster Dec. 16. 1770

Lord Barrington cannot be surpris'd at my having  
express'd my attachment, and faithful discharge of  
the duty which he hath laid on me for eighteen years of  
my Service, but I feel such at leaving this day unwilling  
to his retreat, but as I intend to follow him, notwithstanding  
my approbation of his conduct, arising from that  
consideration alone, and unassisted by him, I have  
taken this method of acquainting him that I have  
directed Lord North to have a Warrant prepar'd  
granting a Pension of two thousand pounds per annum  
untill this I shall be appointed to some other employ  
Lord Barrington may rest assur'd that I shall  
always be esteem'd by him.

George J.

In his private life William enjoyed company and regularly visited the Opera House when he was in London. Records show he paid 20 guineas for an opera season ticket in 1764. His London home was in Cavendish Square and his good salary as Secretary of State enabled him to enjoy a social life with parties at his London home. He was also generous to his mother who was a widow for 30 years. He often visited friends nearby when he went to Beckett.

In his personal life, at the age of 23 William had married Mary Lovell, widow of the Hon Samuel Grimston. There were no surviving children and Mary died in 1764. He remained a widower for the rest of his life. It is understood that he had a great friendship with Lady Harrington, the wife of William, Earl of Harrington. In his diaries he regularly recorded where he stayed overnight upon making the eight-hour journey from London to Beckett in his carriage. He usually stayed at Mongewell, the home of his younger brother Shute Barrington and sometimes at Caversham Park. He enjoyed spending time at Beckett and in his Will in 1774 he wrote: *"I cannot charge myself with any extravagance, unless perhaps I have laid out too much on the House and adjacent grounds at Beckett."*

William was greatly disturbed by the early death of his younger brother Major-General John Barrington. Since he had no heir, he knew that Beckett would be inherited in due course by John's eldest son, also called William. The Viscount regarded this young man as dissolute and a spendthrift and totally unsuited to taking care of the estate at Beckett. He also looked ahead and saw that the second nephew was just as profligate and villainous as his brother and decided that neither of them would inherit Beckett. *(There is more information in a separate section of this book on the behaviour of the third and fourth viscounts).*

William spent more time at Beckett in the last 20 years of his life. He died in February 1793 and is buried in Shrivenham in St Andrew's Parish Church. On the wall of the chancel there is an elegant marble monument to him. It was designed by James Wyatt and carved by Richard Westmacott. (Below).



*Contained within the Barrington Collection at the British Library are 16 diaries of the second Viscount. Please see the article at the end of this publication by Vivien Moss*



## Mary Lovell, wife of William Wildman Viscount Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup>)

c.1710-1764

Mary Lovell was the wife of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount William Wildman Barrington. It is recorded in Cracroft's Peerage that the wedding took place on 16<sup>th</sup> September 1740. Mary was the widow of the Hon Samuel Grimston and the heiress of Henry Lovell, a merchant from Northampton. Mary's paternal Grandfather was the Judge Sir Salathiel Lovell. Samuel Grimston died seven years after they were married and, in his Will, (PROB 11/684/207) he left all his property and everything else he owned to Mary.

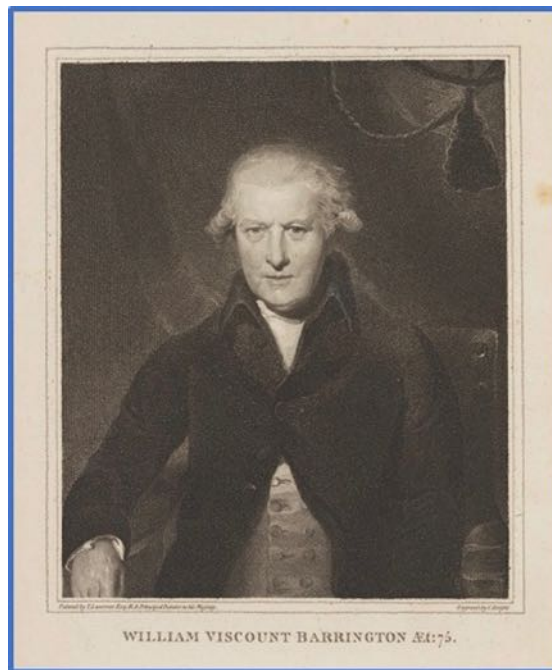
Three years after the death of her husband, Mary agreed to marry William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup>). She had what she called her, '*personal estate*,' and she was eager to keep it personal. Her Will (PROB 11/903/211) described an agreement she made with Lord Barrington whereby her personal estate was to be kept separate and would not become part of William's property as was normal in 18<sup>th</sup> century England. (*a pre-nup.*)

Although it has been suggested that the marriage appears to have been bleak and loveless, it may be more apt to describe it as, practical. In her Will she stated that, '*I always let my money be spent in common with his Lordship in housekeeping the sundry articles thereto belonging.*' William Barrington must have been a practical and efficient man and it's likely he would have respected his wife's wishes to remain financially independent. We also learn from Mary's Will that they had two children, but sadly they both died. She arranged for their bodies to be removed from the vault under Audley Street Chapel, London, to the vault she had built under the porch of Shrivenham parish church, Berkshire. (See separate chapter below). One child was a girl, Rothesia Anne, who was age 4½ and died of smallpox. The other was a boy, William Hill, and from the inscription read recently on his coffin during a survey of the vault, it was discovered that he was only 4 hours old. Mary Lady Viscountess Barrington died in 1764 and was interred in the family vault at Shrivenham with her two children on 12<sup>th</sup> September.

## Viscounts William (3<sup>rd</sup>) & Richard (4<sup>th</sup>) Barrington

### Why they inherited the Title only and nothing else

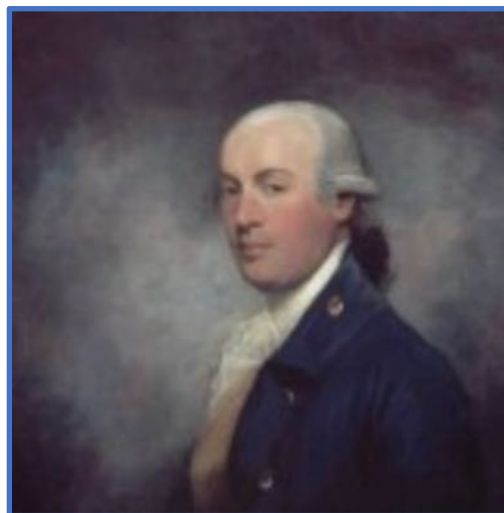
William Wildman Barrington was the second Barrington to bear the title of Viscount. His wife Mary died in 1764 and they had no children. He was a successful man and held many high offices within government, Secretary of the War Office, Treasurer of the Navy, Chancellor of the Exchequer and an M.P. His family owned two estates, Tofts in Essex and Beckett in Shrivenham, Berkshire. Towards the latter part of his life, he returned to his favourite estate at Beckett whenever possible and had a great affection for it. In the notes that he left with his Will he quoted in February 1774, "*I cannot charge myself with any extravagance, unless perhaps I have laid out too much on the House and adjacent Grounds at Beckett.*" (Below - A mature William Barrington, an engraving of a painting by T. Lawrence. NPG. D/14330).



Being well organised and a disciplined man himself, William Barrington was most anxious to have a similar person as an heir to the family estates, but as he had no son himself, the heir would have to come from another family member. From the papers that accompanied his Will he wrote in February 1774, "*When I had the misfortune to loose*

*my Dear Brother General (John) Barrington, it became necessary that I should make a disposition of my affairs entirely new. If he had survived me, he would have taken the proper care of his children. His death placed me in the situation of a father; his children became mine, and it was my duty to take the best care I could of them, both during my life and after my decease. With this view I entailed my Estate on my nephews in succession, and I named for their Guardians and Trustees after my death, persons who had equal integrity and zeal with myself and better understanding. I gave my surviving brothers (Daines, Samuel & Shute) full powers during the minority of our eldest nephew for the time being and knew they would use their powers for the best purposes. My idea was that they should be enabled to do what they pleased with my effects real and personal for the benefit of the trust. I tied them down to no restrictions, knowing that what is prudent today may be imprudent tomorrow.” (BL ADD MS 73691).*

But things were to change when William continued, *“This was the disposition of my affairs till the year 1774, when my nephew William’s conduct at Mr Hall’s and afterwards at Mr Lochee’s made it very doubtful whether he might ever be safely trusted with the management of an Estate or the love of his brothers and sister.”* (Below – William Barrington, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount courtesy of Redwood Library, Newport, USA)



Although it is not clear yet who Mr Hall was, it is known that Lewis Lochee ran the Royal Military Academy in Little Chelsea, London, between 1770 and 1789. In an attempt to make his nephew a commissioned officer of the rank of Captain, William

paid for his attendance at Lewis Lochee's academy. In August 1778 William wrote of the financial value of his Essex Estate and added, "*The above mentioned balance would have been larger if William's Commission of Captain which cost near £1000 with his extravagances and his brother Dick's, had not lessened it. I shall for the future allow them very little and shall pay none of their debts, which would be expense to no good purpose.*"

William was born on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1758 at the family home in Hanover Square, London. He married Anne Murrell on 8<sup>th</sup> July 1781 in Marylebone, London. It is clear that he was of great concern to the Viscount who wrote in May 1780, "*The disgraceful manner in which my eldest nephew William has quitted the army, added to the general turn of his conduct for many years, leaves no expectation of his being ever fit to trust him with the management of my Estate.*" And his younger brother Richard was no better when in April 1785 William wrote of him, "*Richard has so persevered in every sort of Villany that I do not think it proper to leave him anything.*"

So great was the concern of William for the well being of his estates after his death, he placed them in Trust so that his errant nephews could do them no harm. The Trust was overseen by his three brothers Daines a Barrister, Samuel an Admiral and Shute, Lord Bishop of Durham. He felt that it was necessary for them to inherit the title in order that the Viscounty should not lapse and become extinct. Therefore, nephew William would become the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Barrington and Richard the 4<sup>th</sup>.

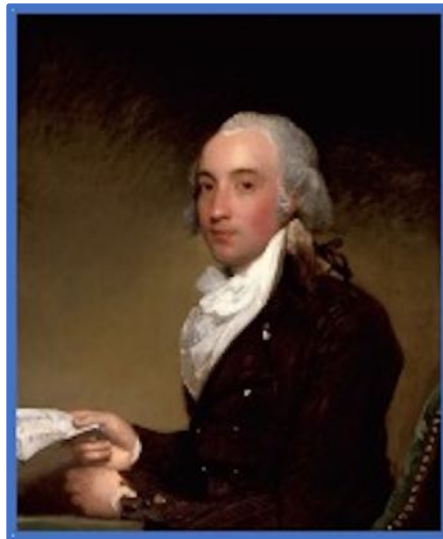
Even though he threatened to leave them nothing, William felt strong loyalty to their father, his late brother John who was a Major General in the Army and had served his country with distinction. William left a bequest in his Will for an annuity of £600 to be granted to nephew William and even left an annuity of £200 to his wife Ann. For Richard, William wrote, "*Notwithstanding the atrocious behaviour of Richard, I still continue to allow the annuity of £150 which I originally bequeathed. I do this merely that he may not be brought from absolute want to a shameful Cad.*"

It's not known yet whether young William Barrington carried out any kind of work or profession. It seems unlikely, preferring instead to live off family legacies. But the

feeling seems to have been mutual about his uncle William the second Viscount. At the end of his life his Will provided the information that he lived in Corston near Bath in Somerset. In it he stipulated that, *"I may be buried in such a parish as I may happen to reside in at the time of my death and that the whole of the expense of my funeral may not exceed £50 and that on no account whatever my corpse may be removed to Beckett or anywhere else out of such a parish wherein I may happen to die."* He died at Corston near Bath in July 1801 and was buried in the nearby church yard of St Mary's at Saltford. His wife Lady Anne (nee Murrell) went on to marry Edward Thornycroft on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1812 at Ubley. She died and was buried at Gawsorth, Cheshire on 13<sup>th</sup> April 1816.

Richard Barrington was born on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1760 at the family home in Hanover Square, London. We learn more of his antics from letters contained within the Barrington Collection at the British Library (BL ADD MS 73690). The elderly Viscount William became aware that his nephew Richard was in Paris. He had friends there, John Lambere and his wife Lady A. Lambere, and in October 1791 she informed William that Richard was there and unwell. William writing in January 1792 to John Lambere said that *'I after let her into his character and informed her that his family had long since withdrawn their countenance from and correspondence with him. I said, "that I would under the attendance of proper medical persons if wanting but that the fees must be paid to the persons themselves and not go through his hands and not on any account be said to come from me." If there has been anything paid to such medical persons in the manner above mentioned, I desire to know it that I may repay the amount with many thanks, but I do not take upon me to pay any debts or drafts of his.'* In November 1791 he wrote to his old friend Madame Lambere to ask if she could pinpoint Richard's location. She wrote back on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1791 explaining she had made all the perquisites possible but could not find out where Mr B lived. *'I have been to Hotels where they said he was, but not there, but certainly not gone. As there is no police it's more difficult to find strangers.'* It should be noted that the French Revolution had already begun and Paris was becoming a dangerous place. William also stated in the letter to John Lambere, *'I am not at all surprised to learn by your letter of the 12<sup>th</sup> Instant that Richard Barrington's draft on Messrs Hoare & Co for £75 has been refused payment and sent back protested. He has for ten or twelve years been drawing such Bills in many parts of Europe, Asia and America to the amount of some thousand pounds,*

*without having ever had a shilling in any merchant or banker's hands. Many of these Bills have been tendered to me, I suppose as having the misfortune of being his uncle. I need not add that I have not paid one of them. I am much surprised that he should get credit anywhere and I am chiefly surprised that he should get it from my friends without any letter active or authority from me.'* (Below – Richard Barrington portrait by Gilbert Stuart).



Upon his brother's death in 1801, Richard realised that he had inherited the title of Richard Lord Viscount Barrington (4<sup>th</sup>). However, as usual, he had no money. But being ever resourceful he decided he would try his luck with the Home Secretary, the Earl of Chichester. On 24<sup>th</sup> September 1801 he wrote, *My Lord. Without having the honour of being personally known to your Lordship I take the liberty of troubling you with this, flattering myself, that the very unhappy situation in which I find myself will plead my excuse. By the death of my Brother, I have lately succeeded to the title, but my lord it is a title without any income annexed to it, and I am so unfortunate that by my conduct at an early period of life I am upon no terms with the Bishop of Durham. I have only an annuity of fifty pounds and an allowance out of the estate of one hundred and fifty more; this my Lord is my real situation, and I leave it to your Lordship to judge how far I am able in these hard times upon such an income to support were the Character of a Gentleman. I have understood that His Majesty in cases like mine has been always graciously pleased to interfere and make some allowance to relieve.'* (BL ADD MS 33108 Folio 43). Unfortunately, we don't know the outcome of his plea.

We have learned further information about him from events nine years later, when his widow, Susan Lady Barrington (nee Budden), was in London and in a desperate condition. She tried several times to see the Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel but was unsuccessful. However, a letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 1823, is précised by Peel's secretary and described that, *'She is now a total stranger, friendless, penniless without friends for she is not an English woman but arrives from Philadelphia and resides in France.'* Her petition included the information that she has a young girl that was dependent on her in France who was very ill, *'the daughter of her husband, a lovely innocent child of 14, who she loves as her own.'* She wanted money to get back to France to tend to her. More information is gleaned at the end of her petition, *'Her late husband died a prisoner at Valenciennes in mortal life a Peer, and all but a very limited income died with him. He was the son of the late General Barrington and was brought up Page of Honour to his late Majesty and was afterwards in the Guards. She married Richard Barrington when she was 13 in America in 1783 and she has not a relative in Europe.'* Unfortunately, we have not discovered the outcome of the petition.

Richard or Dick as he was called by some writers including his uncle William, died at Valenciennes, France on 21<sup>st</sup> January 1814. Like his brother William, he left no male heir. His uncle's Will provided that if William or Richard had produced a son, then he could inherit the family estate. But that was not the case, which left the way clear for the third son of John Barrington called George to inherit the title of Viscount and take control of the Estate. William was most satisfied with George and before he died in February 1793, he had written nothing but good comments about him. George chose to become a Vicar and after his ordination he was appointed the Living of Sedgfield in 1792. With the death of Richard in 1814, the Beckett Estate came out of the Trust it had been in for 20 years. During that period, it had become neglected, and George slowly brought it back to the condition that his uncle William had known in his day.

The Barrington Dynasty was back on track



## George Lord Viscount Barrington (5<sup>th</sup>) 1761 - 1829

George, the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Maj-General John Barrington and his wife Elizabeth Vassall was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1761. He was educated at Westminster School from 1774 where he was a Kings Scholar and then at Christchurch Oxford. He graduated in 1782 and again in 1785 obtaining an MA in Holy Orders. His life was very different from that of his brothers as first and foremost he was a cleric. He became the Rector of Sedgefield in County Durham from 1796 and remained there until his death in 1829 in Italy.

When his brother Richard, the disinherited 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount, died in January 1814 the estate and title passed to George who became the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount Barrington. It was most unusual for a 3<sup>rd</sup> son to inherit a title and estate. George's two older brothers had both been disinherited on account of their disreputable and villainous behaviour as set out above. By this time, he was 53 and well settled into his life with his wife Elizabeth Adair whom he had married in February 1788. Elizabeth Adair was the second daughter of Robert Adair, an Army surgeon and Lady Caroline Keppel who was the second daughter of William van Keppel, the Earl of Albermarle.

We are grateful to his great-niece, Lady Augusta Barrington, for the following account, *"When my Grandfather (George) asked for her hand in marriage Mr Adair told him he felt it his duty to dissuade him from the alliance, as under the circumstances of both his brothers being disinherited and childless it was extremely important for 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. My grandfather said, however, that his attachment was far too strong to be overruled by such reasoning; Mr Adair, having delivered his conscience was in no way averse and the marriage took place – and there were 15 children. And seldom, I think, were so many tall, handsome brothers and sisters seen in one family. Only one, the youngest daughter, Elizabeth, inherited her mother's deformity, and curiously enough she was named after her. She had a lovely face and one of the sweetest dispositions I knew."*

The 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount continued to follow his clerical career in Durham Cathedral where he was a Prebendary. However, he was very much aware that the Beckett estate and house had been rather neglected during the 20 years it had been in Trust. When he acceded, there was only one Trustee instead of the three appointed by William Wildman Barrington, two having passed away. The sole Trustee was Bishop Shute Barrington, the Bishop of Durham who had, "*placed his nephew Mr Barrington Price in charge of Beckett as resident agent, but very little was done for the property and when the Trust terminated, the farms and cottages were all out of repair and there was not a shilling of ready money. On the other hand, he left a large sum to build a new house, the old one, a hideous barrack, being in a ruinous condition.*" (from the *Memoirs of Lady Augusta Barrington*, p.19).

George Barrington was not able to move to Beckett, neither did he want to. After a recommendation from a personal friend, he appointed from April 1815 a new Estate Manager at Beckett by the name of George Merryweather who immediately set about putting the estate into good repair. He also produced a very detailed account of all the farms that belonged to the estate, Sandhill Farm, Stallpits, Galleyherns, Cowleaze, Ruffinwick, Manor Farm, Home Farm, Homeleaze, Oxleaze and Broadleaze. He described the condition they were in and what in his opinion could be done to improve them. Merryweather reported to the Viscount very regularly as most of his 68 detailed letters between 1816 and 1818 have survived. (*These letters have been published by Shrivenham Heritage Society –SHS Listing No: N1549*). George Merryweather left the Beckett Estate in 1821 and was replaced by Robert Dawson. (*Please see SHS Listing No: N909 for more information on him*).

At the end of his life George Barrington had travelled to Italy where he became seriously ill and died in Rome on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1829, aged 68. Lady Augusta Barrington records in her *Memoirs* that he was buried in the Protestant cemetery there.

## **Elizabeth Adair wife of George Viscount Barrington (5<sup>th</sup>) 1768 - 1841**

Elizabeth was born to Robert Adair, surgeon-general to the army, and Lady Caroline Keppel, daughter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Albemarle, on the 20<sup>th</sup> May 1768 in London. We know she was baptised at the church of St Botolph two days later. She was almost 20 when she married the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Maj-General John Barrington, George on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1788. George, later at the age of 52 became the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount Barrington. At that time, he was a Prebendary at Durham Cathedral, having taken Holy Orders.

Held at the British Library there are letters from the renowned and talented late Georgian actress, Sarah Siddons, to Elizabeth before her marriage to George in 1788. We know that Elizabeth was living at Stratford Place, Oxford St in London and clearly she knew the undisputed Queen of tragedy with whom she corresponded. Sarah Siddons came from a theatrical family and as a teenager had been companion to a Lady Mary Greatheed. With her stature and powerfully expressive eyes she developed a regal manner both on and off the stage at the Royal Theatre in Drury Lane and was completely at ease with both members of the aristocracy and the gentry. The Royal Family had invited her to give readings and it may have been there that Sarah met Elizabeth. Sarah's letters, held in the British Library among the Barrington Papers, (BL ADD MS 73736) use the "thee" and "thou" forms of address, she calls Elizabeth, "my dear girl", "my angel", "my sweet Elizabeth" and says she is missing her company. A letter written immediately before Elizabeth and George's wedding in 1788 is full of love and she says she has only just heard of the coming event and, "what a husband." Her sister had described the Viscount George Barrington as, "the most amiable man in the world." The Memoirs of Lady Augusta Barrington show that the celebrated Sarah Siddons, was, "a dear friend and constant correspondent of old Lady Barrington and packets of her letters were preserved." An interesting document recently emerged from the Huntingdon Library in the USA. It is digitised from, "Eighteenth Century Drama; Censorship, Society and the Stage" acquired from Sir Henry Irving Bixby. It is a one-page fragment of a signed letter in which Siddons communicates that she will be staying with Lady Barrington who was mourning the death of her son, until she (Siddons) is, "wanted in Edinburgh." Francis Daines Adair was born in 1807 and died in 1808. He is

buried in Durham Cathedral. At that time Sarah Siddons was the undisputed Queen of Drury Lane. (BL ADD MS 73736).

Elizabeth Adair remained a widow for about 12 years after the death of her husband in 1829 in Rome. Elizabeth had been left the Dower House, known as Shrivenham House, which her son William Keppel Barrington and his family had occupied since 1824. Augusta Barrington noted, "*Knowing their extreme desire to superintend personally the building of the new House at Beckett, she very kindly consented to give it up to them as long as they required it and established herself and her large family at a dilapidated old manor house at Watchfield, the adjacent hamlet, where they were uncomfortably crowded.*" (Augusta Barrington's Memoires Page 26. See SHS publications for info on Watchfield House). The new Viscount and his family moved into the new Beckett House in 1834 and Elizabeth moved back into the Dower House where she lived until she died in 1841. Lady Augusta remembered her as a very small old lady sitting at the writing-table in the library when she and her sister Addy were very young and went to see her. Shrivenham House bears the coronet and initials of Elizabeth Adair with the date 1834 above the front door to record her spending £4000 on the house renovation. Curiously, there is a similar plaque on the large house at Sandhill Farm, Shrivenham, dated 1841, the year of her death, but as yet, we have no explanation for this. She is interred in the family Vault at St Andrew's. (See chapter below).

### **Children of George Barrington and Elizabeth Adair**

William Keppel *	Became the sixth Viscount. 1793 - 1869
George	Married Lady Caroline Grey. 1794 - 1835
Samuel	Died at Battle of Waterloo. 1796 - 1815
John	Interred in Durham Cathedral. 1797 - 1804
Augustus	Trained as a Lawyer. 1798 - 1860
Caroline Elizabeth	Married Thomas Liddell. 1799 - 1890
Russell	Married Maria Lyon. 1801 - 1835
Frances	Married Lord Dartmouth. 1802 - 1849
Charlotte Balasyse	Married the Rev H. Burton. 1804 - 1849
Lowther John	Married Lady Catherine Pelham. 1805 - 1897
Arthur	Died 2 days after Bishop of Durham. 1806 - 1826
Henry	Married Miss Georgina Cox. 1808 - 1882
Francis Daines	Interred in Durham Cathedral. 1807 - 1808
Georgiana	Married Hamilton Anstruther. 1810 - 1881
Elizabeth Frances	Married Rev T. Mills. 1811 - 1886

## William Keppel Lord Viscount Barrington (6<sup>th</sup>) 1793 – 1867



William Keppel Barrington was the eldest son of the fifth Viscount, George Barrington who had married Elizabeth Adair. George was the Vicar of Sedgfield and a Canon of Durham Cathedral. William was born there on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1793. Like his father before him William was educated at Westminster School where he was a King's Scholar and then passed on to Christchurch, Oxford. His daughter Augusta noted, *"he used to declare that during his first year at Westminster he learned little, was insufficiently fed and constantly employed in blacking boots, brushing the clothes and doing other menial offices for the big boy to whom he was fag."* (Augusta Barrington's Memoirs SHS Listing No: N887. Page 20)

William and Elizabeth were married in April 1823 and spent the first years of their life together in London, in Brook Street, where their first four children were born. One of the first tasks that the new Viscount set himself was to get the building of the proposed new mansion house under way. The Bishop of Durham had died in 1826, leaving a substantial legacy of £30,000 for that purpose. The renowned architect, William

Atkinson had built Sir Walter Scott's new home at Abbotsford and had done renovations on Scone Palace, but his existing plans for the new house at Beckett were firmly rejected by the family as being a very ugly square house. It was to the design of William's Brother-in-Law, Thomas Liddell, that the new house was built. *(For further information on this, see the separate section on the New Beckett House below).* The Barrington family moved into their new house 1834. The complete outer shell was finished but only the inner rooms on the western part were habitable. The rest was not fully completed until 1855. (Below. Photo by Neil B. Maw).

William Keppel Barrington fulfilled his social obligations that befitted his status. He was one of the three MPs for Berkshire from 1837 - 1857. He was Chairman of the Berkshire Quarter Sessions Law Courts for 36 years. He was also chairman of the Great Western Railway between 1856 and 1857. During the discussions about the positioning of the new railway by I. K. Brunel in the late 1830s, Lord Barrington had made it clear that he did not want the railway to be within at least a mile of his estate.

However, he was happy to open Beckett Park to the public on special occasions such as the Annual Fete in the Summer when the local newspaper, the Swindon Advertiser reported that, *"It is customary for thousands of persons to be present at these Fetes."* There was another report, *"The Annual Feast, was given by Lord Barrington to the schoolchildren of the parish held at Beckett Park."* And a further article reported a delightful Harvest Home in 1864, *"The labourers and tradesmen with their wives (about a hundred 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."*

William Keppel was also chosen to be Captain of the newly formed Vale of White Horse Yeomanry Cavalry unit in 1830. A wave of unrest was sweeping the country and the government decided to resurrect this unit to deal with any bad behaviour. (For further information please see N1544 in the SHS online catalogue).

It's fair to say that these were the Halcyon Days for Beckett, when the Estate was able to pay for itself; but it was an age drawing towards a close. It provided employment and stability to the whole district. More evidence of this comes from The Swindon Advertiser newspaper when in 1866 it reported, *"On New Year's Day, the annual servants ball came off at Beckett Park, through the kind liberality of Viscount and Viscountess Barrington. The Ball opened at 10 o'clock, and dancing was kept up until midnight when supper was announced."*

William died in 1867 aged 73. Augusta Barrington noted that the close family came from far and near to say goodbye in his last days. She added, *"all the servants, outdoor and in, filed through the room; most of them sobbing bitterly, to take a last look at their old Master. Father was so universally loved and respected that the attendance at the funeral was very large, and the utmost sympathy was shown by people of all ranks."* (Augusta Barrington's *Memoirs Page 64*).





## Jane Elizabeth wife of Viscount Barrington (6<sup>th</sup>) 1804 - 1883



We are indebted to the extensive Memoirs of Lady Augusta Barrington who was the 5<sup>th</sup> child and 3<sup>rd</sup> daughter of William Keppel Barrington the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount and his wife Jane Elizabeth. Lady Augusta was very close to her mother and recorded much detailed information about her. She introduced the Memoirs in 1886 saying that she wanted to remember what she had observed and incorporate some memories from other family members. All without exception moved in the highest social circles and the Memoirs abound with details of meetings and visits taking place with Royalty and other members of the Aristocracy.

Jane was born in Northumberland on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1804 to Sir Thomas Liddell and Lady Maria Susannah. Sir Thomas, later first Baron Ravensworth, had inherited the family estate of Ravensworth Castle in Northumberland along with extensive coal mining interests. Jane's maternal grandparents were the Earl and Countess of

Strathmore. (Above. Jane Elizabeth (nee Liddell) NPG D11125). She was the seventh child and fourth daughter, and her mother went on to have another eight children. The whole family were not only blessed with good looks and amiable tempers but also with considerable artistic skills. All had a great love of music. Lady Augusta described Jane as, "*the spoilt darling of this family, as lovely as a fairy with blue eyes, small features, golden curls, a complexion of lilies and roses and an exquisite figure, round, plump and wonderfully graceful.*"

Jane's mother was an accomplished artist who happily left the education of her daughters to the governesses and the servants. Consequently, her education was sketchy and fragmented until she was eleven when it ceased altogether. With her bright enquiring mind, she learned much from her family's regular visits abroad. In the London season all the children had lessons from a "*bewildering list of Masters: singing, piano, harp, French, Italian, writing, drawing harmony and drawing. Dancing, filled up every hour of every day.*" Jane excelled at dancing and singing for she had a considerable talent for music with a lovely and well cultivated mezzo-soprano voice. She had good natural abilities, an excellent memory which she cultivated all her life learning passages of poetry by heart chiefly from Paradise Lost and the Christian Year. Had she been educated to the standard of the day in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Jane would have been highly accomplished. She sometimes lamented her ignorance but in later life her tact and quickness of observation enabled her to cope in any difficult situation.

The Liddell family regularly spent the summer and early Autumn at Eslington, a delightful place in Northumberland, and every spring this large family migrated in a procession of coaches to their London house in Portland Place. Frequent visits were also paid to Brighton for a strong personal friendship existed between the family and the Prince Regent. Apparently, he and his brothers took a great deal of notice of the children.

Jane was formally presented at Court in 1822 and it was there that she met William Keppel Barrington whom she married in April the following year. They had met earlier when Jane was much younger, and William had fallen under her spell and was

determined to marry her. When his great-uncle, Bishop Shute Barrington who was keen to see his favourite nephew married and settled with a family of his own, heard that William felt he could not ask Jane to marry him as his allowance from the fifth Viscount was too small, he immediately gave William an allowance of £1,500 a year. Jane and William were soon married at the Liddell's London home in Portland Place. Augusta recorded that it was not the fashion then to give wedding presents to the Bride and Groom, but Jane was delighted to receive a pair of handsome ornaments from her dear friends the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. After the ceremony the couple drove in an open chaise to Shrivenham where they stayed at Courtney Cottage in the High Street opposite the Vicarage. This was later pulled down to make way for the village School.

Their early married life was spent in Brook Street, Grosvenor Square and this was where their first four children were born. Jane quickly learned to handle the complicated household accounts which had 36 headings. William's family was almost as large as Jane's and they both enjoyed socialising with their relatives all over the country in their large and welcoming country houses as well as travelling abroad. It was while they were in Naples in 1829 that William was summoned to Rome on account of the dangerous illness of the fifth Viscount who died there a few days later. William then succeeded to the title and the Beckett estate, and the family returned to England to live in Shrivenham House. It was at this time that plans were finalised about the building of the new Beckett House by Thomas Liddell to which they moved in 1834 when it was partially completed. Jane's 6<sup>th</sup> child, Caroline but always known as Lina, was the first baby to be born in the new Beckett House in 1834. This baby was given the name of Caroline to replace the adorable little girl of six who was so tragically killed in a carriage accident in London earlier the same year. This was the first great sorrow of Jane's life

After the birth of Augusta in 1836 King William let it be known that Jane Barrington should accept the position of Lady-in-waiting to Queen Adelaide. This was the beginning of a friendship between the two ladies and later Jane called her next baby girl, Adelaide, after the Queen who became her Godmother. The position of Lady-in-

waiting involved being present for a month at a time at the Court. It was an honour, and the duties were not very onerous. It did involve some travel abroad at times.

Lady Augusta's memoirs abound with the names of visitors to Beckett and the names of family and friends with whom they stayed. For example, Lord Strathmore, who married Jane's daughter Charlotte, the Duke of Cambridge, Lord Salisbury, Prince Edward of Saxe Weimar, Sir Walter Scott, Lady Holland and Lord Landsdowne to name but a few. Augusta herself married Bishop William MacLagan who later became the Archbishop of York.

In 1839 Jane decided to have an English governess for her children. She had found the three foreigners she had employed to be less than satisfactory. The Miss Stewart Boyd Muir had admirable recommendations but her main talent according to Lady Augusta was the way she took everybody in. A secret drinker she concealed her weakness for 11 years. It was the family physician Dr Mantell who let Lord and Lady Barrington know that in his opinion the governess was on the verge of delirium tremens. This was further substantiated by the enormous bills from Fortnum and Mason in London and from the Barrington Arms in Shrivenham where alcohol had been ordered in Lord Barrington's name. Jane and William were aghast at their own blindness.

The Barringtons continued to spend time at Beckett, occasionally going to their London home in Cavendish Square, travelling to Ravensworth each Autumn and meeting and staying with lots of relatives throughout the country. They were connected by marriage to most of the other members of the aristocracy.

Jane and William were, *"so fondly united for 44 years"*. William died in February 1867 at Beckett. Widowhood brought about a great change in Jane's life. She was, financially speaking, very comfortable and spent the remaining years of her life in their London home. She continued to be socially active and while Augusta was still living with her, together they made regular trips to Glamis Castle in Scotland. Augusta wrote that, *"every summer, towards the end of July, she and I started on a tour of visits, until the middle of October. Shortly before Christmas we went to Beckett for six or seven weeks and*

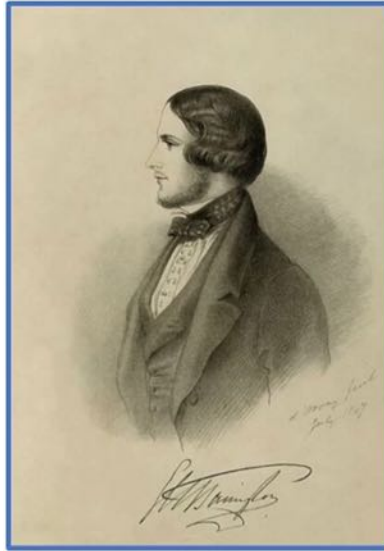
*Easter was usually spent at Westbury, Bucks."* Sadly, Jane died in March 1883 after a fall on the stairs in her London home. She was 79 and was brought back to Shrivenham where she was interred in the new chamber of the family vault built by her husband. (See separate chapter below).

Augusta quoted from a letter from Queen Victoria in March 1883 addressed to Lord Barrington, Jane's eldest son, George, *"The Queen cannot express how deeply, how truly grieved she is at this sad event, and the terrible, irreparable loss Lord Barrington has sustained in the loss of his dear mother and in so distressing a way. Dear Lady Barrington, was so charming and the Queen had known her so long that she truly mourns her and feels most deeply for Lord Barrington and the rest of her family."* (Augusta Barrington's Memoirs Page 92).

### **Children of William Keppel Barrington and Jane Elizabeth Liddell**

George William *	Became the seventh Viscount. 1824 - 1886
Percy *	Became the eighth Viscount. 1825 - 1901
Caroline Susan Augusta	Married the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Earl of Normanton. 1835 - 1915
William Augustus Curzon	Held several high government Posts. 1842 - 1922
Bernard Eric Edward	Held high government office. 1847 - 1918
Charlotte Maria	Married Thomas George Bowes-Lyon. 1826 - 1854
Mary Frances	Married Alfred Urban Sartoris. 1831 - 1913
Augusta Anne *	Married Rev William D. Maclagan. 1836 - 1915
Adelaide	Married Charles Balfour. 1839 - 1862

## George William Lord Viscount Barrington (7<sup>th</sup>) 1824-1886



George was the eldest son of the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount William Barrington and his wife the Hon Jane Elizabeth Liddell, daughter of the Earl of Ravensworth. He was born at their London home of Lower Brook Street on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 1824. After leaving Christchurch, Oxford and like so many of his ancestors he was heavily involved in the Government of his country. When Lord Derby was Prime Minister George became his Private Secretary for some time. After his appointment as a Lieutenant in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry Company he became the Deputy Lieutenant for Berkshire. He unsuccessfully attempted to represent Buckingham as an MP but in 1852 he was elected for Eye in 1866. (Above. Copy of an engraving by Richard James Lane dated 1847).

George inherited the Viscountcy following the death of his father in 1867. He was MP for Eye from 1866 - 1880. As with his predecessors his title did not preclude him from sitting in the House of Commons because his title was in the Irish peerage. He was Viscount Barrington of Ardglass in the County of Down in Ireland. However, in 1880 he was created Baron Shute of the United Kingdom a great honour, but which meant he could no longer stay in the Commons as this automatically entitled him to a seat in the House of Lords. In his parliamentary days on the formation of Mr Disraeli's administration he was sworn in to the Privy Council in 1874 and appointed Vice-



Chamberlain of the Household 1880 – 1884. Benjamin Disraeli was a frequent visitor to Beckett House and a personal friend of Lord Barrington who had a brass plaque placed on the south wall of St Andrew's Church Shrivenham in his memory after he died in 1881.

Lady Augusta Barrington stated in her Memoirs, that her older brother George was not particularly easy to live with and of whom she and her sisters were in awe. She said that George would never divulge any important information unless he was absolutely sure of its veracity. This points to a man who pays great attention to detail and may explain why he was well thought of in Parliament. During Disraeli's tenure of office George was Reporter of the Debates of Parliament to the Queen. The Reading Mercury newspaper dated 13<sup>th</sup> November 1886 reported that, "*his popularity in the London world and his mastery of all social matters insured him a position such as few could pretend to rival.*"

Another indication of his meticulousness is the description of every piece of furniture in every room in Beckett House in a document of 30 pages. (Please see SHS N857 *to read or download a copy*). He described in extraordinary detail all the rooms in the new house, the furniture, the paintings and décor. It is thanks to him that we are made aware that there are at least two marble fireplaces that were salvaged from the older Beckett House and placed in the new. (Below. One of the marble fireplaces from the old house).



The Viscount was known for his hospitality to one and all. In the Journal of Horticulture and Cottage Gardens, dated 14<sup>th</sup> August 1873 we read, *“the Park gates were freely thrown open on the occasion of what is well known in the district as the Great Western Fete, to the hundreds of workmen engaged at the Swindon Railway works with their families and many more besides. The four miles of walks, much of them confined between Box hedges three feet high and which it is stated were planted by Bishop Barrington. On the west side of the house is a terrace well covered with roses and magnolias, having standard roses surrounded with mignonette beds in front. A veritable garden of flowers and sweet odours in the evening.”*

The Swindon Advertiser of 30<sup>th</sup> August 1875 reported that *“The annual treat to School Children of Shrovenham took place at Beckett Park on Thursday last. Headed by the Swindon Brass Band the children and their teachers, preceded by the Vicar, marched through the village to the Park, where they were supplied with refreshments and amused with a variety of sports. At the same time many of the inhabitants of the village and the tenantry, were as usual present by invitation and were most agreeably entertained by Viscount and Viscountess Barrington.”*

Like the previous Viscount he served the community with justice as Chairman of the Faringdon Bench of Magistrates but sadly George died rather suddenly when he was taking part in a shoot on Lady Willoughby d’Eresby’s estate in Lincolnshire in November 1886. His funeral took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> November and was attended by a large amount of mourners. He was interred in the family vault at the West end of the church. (See below for info on the family vault). Among the tributes to him was this expressed by the Vicar, the Rev George Murray, *“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.”*

For some time before his death, he had been aware that the titles and the Beckett Estate would pass to his brother, Percy, as he himself had no male issue. Accordingly, George had drawn up a legal document, called a remainder, which identified Percy as his heir if at his death there was no son to take the titles.

## Isabella Elizabeth Morritt wife of the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount 1826 - 1898

Isabella was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> August 1826 at Rokeby Park to Mary and John Morritt both of whom came from well-established aristocratic families. Rokeby Park, a country house in the Palladian style near Barnard Castle in County Durham was the seat of the Whig MP John Bacon Sawyer Morritt and the house was described by the late Giles Worsley in 1987 as, *“one of the purest examples of the neo-Palladian villa. It was designed by its owner, Sir Thomas Robinson, built between 1725 - 1730 and later sold to the Morritt family in 1769. The sale included many works of art gathered on the Grand Tours. Sir Thomas and later his son greatly admired the arts and the designs of the Venetian architect Andrea Palladio”*.

Isabella grew up in this environment. However, at the tender age of five years she lost her father; both the exact date and the circumstances are unknown. On the 28<sup>th</sup> April 1832 her mother married George St John-Mildmay with whom she had two sons. Isabella thus had two stepbrothers. This is mentioned because it is not known why at the age of 16 she was the plaintiff in a case in Chancery brought against her mother and her step-father in 1843 by her maternal uncle the lawyer Evan Baillie on her behalf. It would appear that John Bacon Sawyer Morritt was childless and Isabella's father John Morritt was not a direct heir to the Rokeby Park estate.

When Isabella was 19 she married the Hon George Barrington at St George's Church in Hannover Square, London on the 19 February 1846. George's younger sister, Lady Augusta Barrington gave an interesting account in her Memoirs, *“Only the elders of the family attended the ceremony which took place from the house of the bride's maternal uncle, Mr Baillie of Dochfour. We were grievously disappointed at no wedding cake being sent us, but our annoyance speedily disappeared when we saw our new sister-in-law. She was very pretty and extremely kind to us. The only thing that amazed us was that how a creature so charming and so lovely could care for our eldest brother who we still feared and disliked.”*

George, the future Viscount and Isabella spent their first year living at Beckett. They lived for several years in Europe, at Baden, Frankfort and Paris, only coming home to Beckett for long visits in the summer. When George became the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount in 1867 Beckett House then became their permanent home.

Isabella died at Devonshire Place, Marylebone, London on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1898 and was buried in St Andrew's Churchyard, Shrivenham three days later. (Below)

### Children of George and Isabella

Constance	Married Lawrence Hesketh Palk. 1847 - 1926
Evelyn Laura	Mard George Grimston Earl Craven. 1848 - 1924
Florence Isabell	Became a Nun. 1851 - 1928



## Percy Lord Viscount Barrington (8<sup>th</sup>)1825 - 1901



The Hon Percy Barrington was the second son of the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount and the Hon Jane Liddell, daughter of Thomas Liddell, 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Ravensworth. He was born in London on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1825 and like his father and elder brother George, was educated at Eton. When aged 16 he became an officer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Buckinghamshire Rifle Brigade and the Scots Fusilier Guards for four years. He was both a soldier and a landowner. In his lifetime he was the Deputy Lieutenant for Oxfordshire and the High sheriff of Buckinghamshire for 1864. (Above. NPG Ax10006).

In 1845 he married Louisa Higgins daughter and heiress of Tully Higgins, a wealthy owner of a plantation and slaves in the former British colony of Guiana. For the first few years of their marriage they lived either in hired lodgings or at the home of one

of Percy's many relatives. It was not until 1852 that Percy bought Westbury Manor, near Brackley in Buckinghamshire. This was his home and where he felt he belonged for the rest of his life.

In 1886 his brother George the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount died without leaving a male heir. The titles and estate at Beckett then passed to Percy. George had known that his three daughters would not be entitled to inherit the estate and had in 1880 when he was created Baron Shute in the Peerage of the United Kingdom, established with a legal remainder that the title was to go to his younger brother Percy.

In 1886 Percy, as Viscount Barrington, held two estates; the Beckett estate and the L-shaped Manor House at Westbury where he had lived so happily from 1852 with Louisa and their three children. He was happy to help the community in which he lived and donated land to extend the churchyard, helped with the church restoration and provided money for a new church organ. Like his father in Shrivenham, William Keppel the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount, he was involved financially in the building of the first National School in 1861 in his own village of Westbury. This was a few years before Forster's famous Education Acts making education available and free of charge to every child. Earlier in Westbury there had only been a Dame School. He regularly on each Quarter Day when they had paid their rent, gave his farming tenants dinner at the Swan & Castle pub in Buckingham. Clearly, he was very much involved in the village life of Westbury and socially active.

Percy was aware of the importance of Beckett and the family name of Barrington, but the country was in troubled times financially and known as the Great Depression. On a visit to Beckett in the summer of 1888, Percy attended a Forester's Fete and was the guest of honour at the dinner. Replying to a toast he commented that when he came into possession of the title and estate, 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, since a great deal of money would have to be spent upon the estate, whilst the income would not meet the expenditure.

Percy died in 1901 and is buried in Westbury. A comment made by the 1870s blacksmith's son, Wilfred Turner, reads, "*Westbury had a lovely choir and we all had to go and sing at the Viscount's funeral. The grave was lined with lilies of the valley and freesias from the Manor hothouses. I always remember the good feed we had down there.*" (Below. Westbury Manor from *The Builder* 1904)





## Louisa Higgins, wife of the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount 1825 - 1884



Louisa, who was born in 1825, was the daughter of Tully Higgins and Charlotte Bulkeley. (Above. NPG Ax10007). Tully Higgins was a planter and the owner of slaves on the Blenheim estate in Demerara, British Guiana. This was formerly a British colony and is now known as Guyana. Tully was a wealthy man when he died in 1832. His Will showed £140,000 to be dispersed. His estate of Blenheim passed to his son, Bulkeley who sadly died at the age of 19 in 1834. Louisa had been given £30,000 in her father's Will and when her brother died, she inherited the estate. Together this formed part of her marriage settlement on her wedding to the Hon Percy Barrington in 1845. Louisa was described by Jane Elizabeth Barrington, her mother-in-law as, "*amiable and good as she was rich.*"

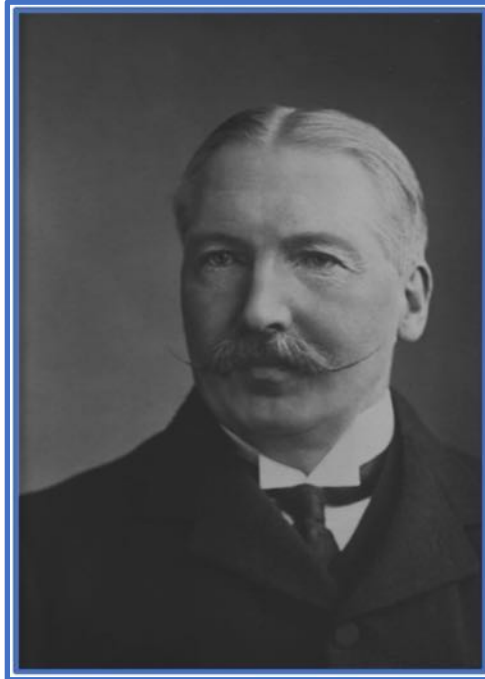
Lady Augusta recorded in her Memoirs that Percy and his wife never had a home in London. They spent their first winter at Beckett where poor Louisa, little used to a country life, went through agonies of terror every time Percy went out hunting and met with scant sympathy from his hard-hearted sisters, accustomed to see people come home late in the winter evenings. After this they hired a place in Hampshire called Beaupaire and then took a large house in Oxfordshire, Tusmore House. In 1852 they bought Westbury Manor in Buckinghamshire.

Percy and Louisa spent their married life together at Westbury, near Brackley on the borders of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. Percy succeeded to the title and the Beckett estate in 1886, but sadly this was two years after Louisa had died of cancer and she never became the Viscountess. She was laid to rest at Westbury.

### **Children of Percy Barrington and Louisa Higgins**

Walter Bulkeley *	Became the ninth Viscount. 1848 - 1933
Alice Louisa	Married George Campbell. 1849 - 1928
Edith	Married Capt Abraham Robarts. 1850 - 1919

## Walter Bulkeley Lord Viscount Barrington (9<sup>th</sup>) 1848 - 1933



Walter, the only son and first child of the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount, Percy Barrington and Louisa Higgins was born on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1848 at Tusmore in Oxfordshire. He was named after his uncle and his maternal grandmother. His two sisters were the Hon Alice Louisa Barrington and the Hon Edith Barrington. Following the family tradition, he was educated at Eton from the age of nine and then went into the Army in the Coldstream Guards.

The Memoirs of Lady Augusta reveal that when Walter was 20 years of age he fell ill with typhoid fever and that, *'in his delirium he let out that he had been secretly engaged ever since he was at Eton to a young lady one year his senior, by name Mary Bogue, the daughter of a Devonshire clergyman. When the danger was over, the butler Chambers remarked to Louisa, "It's a very odd thing Ma'am, that Mr Walter keeps calling for Mary, and you know it is Jane who always does his room."* When the danger was at its height and in a lucid interval, Walter drew a packet of letters from under his pillow and gave them to his mother saying, *"Write to her," 'and the mother's love for her idolised and only son overcame her prudence and she sent Miss Bogue a daily bulletin and involved herself in a daily*

*correspondence much to her husband's, Percy's extreme annoyance. However, nothing was settled that winter except that Walter had his debts paid and left the Guards.'*

It appears that Walter's father, Percy the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount, only gave his reluctant consent to Walter's and Mary Isabella's marriage in 1870 because he himself had a bad flare up of a long-term medical condition of an abscess on the spine. He was speedily deteriorating and by September 1869 the family had braced themselves for bad news. Believing that he was dying, Percy consented to the marriage of Walter to whom he was tenderly attached and could not bear to think of passing away from life in the act of thwarting his son's longed for wishes. In fact, Percy recovered from his debilitating illness and lived for another 31 years.

In Augusta's Memoirs there is a reference to more ill-health, "*Soon after the birth of his daughter in 1874 Walter was seized with a strange illness, a succession of slight paralytic strokes.*"

This probably left its mark as he walked with a slight limp. The Hon Walter Bulkeley Barrington occupied Shrivenham House until his father Percy, the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount died.

Walter succeeded to the title of Beckett and the estate on the 29<sup>th</sup> April 1901 at the age of 53, but sadly Mary Isabella only lived for another two years. Walter in 1905 married his second wife, Charlotte Birch, the daughter of the Earl of Courtown and who was then a widow with five children. They made Beckett their main home from 1907 after improving and installing electricity in the mansion house. At the time of writing it is within living memory that Lord Barrington was highly regarded by the villagers. Dennis Stratton, now in his 90s paid him a great compliment when he said, "*He was both respected and loved.*" Walter had been a keen cricketer right from his schooldays at Eton and joined the village team whenever he could. Charlotte became something of a champion for the local people. She was a great believer in traditional family values and campaigned tirelessly among her friends in London for funds to build not only the community building we have today, the Memorial Hall, but also to build eight

cottages in the Recreation Ground designated for returning, disabled servicemen from the First World War.

Both Charlotte and Walter involved themselves in village life as well as in the welcoming and well-known hospitality they dispensed to their friends. Walter gave the land on which the Men's Institute stands and headed the subscription list to provide the means for a Reading Room for the men of the village. The Faringdon Advertiser dated 20<sup>th</sup> September 1913, recorded the entertainment at Beckett where about 180 people mainly from the villages of Watchfield and Shrivenham together with the railway staff, sat down to a bountiful tea. Walter was clearly following in the footsteps of his father with providing such amusements for the visitors who had free access to bowls, skittles and boating on the lake while a Band played. Toys and prizes were provided.

He was still an MP and in 1911 he was one of the peers who voted against the passing of a Parliament Act designed to remove the right of the Lords to veto money Bills completely. This Act also wanted to reduce from seven years to five years the maximum life of a Parliament. (Below. A more mature Walter Bulkeley at the opening of the new Memorial Hall, Shrivenham in 1925. Photo below & above courtesy of SHS).



Sadly, life in England was beginning to change as the 20<sup>th</sup> century progressed, and the Beckett Estate was one of the many that suffered a reduction in income meaning that its sale was inevitable. While the farms of the estate were all sold from the first sale in 1917, Beckett House itself was not sold until 1937 after the death of Viscountess Barrington in 1935. Walter died in 1933. At his funeral at St Andrew's church, Shrivenham, he was affectionately carried and escorted by his white flannelled cricket team players.

### **Mary Isabella Bogue first wife of 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount Barrington c.1845 - 1903**

Mary Isabella Barrington was the third child of the Rev Richard Bogue and his wife Sophia Mudge born about 1845 in Denbury, Devon. It was from the Memoirs of Augusta Barrington that we learn of the secret love that Walter Barrington had for her. A later entry in Lady Augusta's Memoirs read, "*I forgot to say that in October Walter's fiancée came to Westbury for a few days' visit. She was at that time undeniably handsome but looked a good deal older than Walter and owned to being two and a half years his senior.*" They were married on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1870. (*The Memoirs of Augusta Barrington Page 68-70*)

When Walter succeeded to the Barrington title and the Beckett estate in April 1901, Mary Isabella became the Viscountess Barrington. Sadly, it was not for long as she died in 1903. Her funeral took place at St Andrew's Church, Shrivenham on 19<sup>th</sup> November and was attended by many mourners. (Below - Walter and Mary Isabella and family. Photo courtesy of Antony Alderson).

### **Children of Walter Bulkeley and Mary Isabella Bogue**

William Reginald Shute *	Became the tenth Viscount. 1873 - 1960
Walter Bernard Louis	High office within Insurance. 1876 - 1959
Rupert Edward Selbourne	Lt Col & awarded DSO. 1877 - 1975
Percy Evelyn	Married Muriel Constance Oyler. 1884 - 1911
Maude Louisa	Married Hon Eustace RS FitzGerald. 1871 - 1924
Violet Mary	Married John CEH Brooke. 1872 - 1938
Hilda Margaret *	Mar. Maj Gen Sir Reginald S Curtis. 1874 - 1929



**Walter Bulkeley**<sup>b1848-d1933</sup> (Succeeded as 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount 1901)

**Violet**

**Maud**

**William Reginald Shute**<sup>b1873-d1960</sup> **Walter Bernard Louis**<sup>b1876-d1959</sup>

(Succeeded as 10<sup>th</sup> Viscount 1933)

**Hilda**

**Mary Isabella** First wife of Walter d1903 (Mother of the children)

**Percy Evelyn**<sup>b1884-d1911</sup>

**Rupert Edward Selborne**<sup>b1877-d1972</sup>

The Barrington Family, a Studio photograph c.1885



**Charlotte Mary Arden Birch second wife of Walter Bulkeley Lord  
Viscount Barrington (9<sup>th</sup>) 1855 – 1935**



Charlotte Mary was the second wife of the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount, Walter Bulkeley Barrington. Her great-grandfather was the Earl of Courtown and her family moved into a grace and favour apartment in Hampton Court Palace when Charlotte was 16 years old. In her well-connected and wealthy circle of friends she met and married John Arden Birch whose father was a Banker and owned Rickmansworth Park in Hertfordshire. Her circle then widened even more to include politicians, publishers, celebrities in both Art and Literature and occasional foreign Royalty. She was always interested in people. Sometime after being widowed at an early age with 5 children, she took an unusual step and decided to do some social work which involved visiting some of the men in the London Hospital where they were recovering from injuries sustained in the Boer War. This was to have a lasting effect. She wrote in her Autobiography that she was filled with trepidation at the first meeting but quickly came to appreciate, "*the fine characters and many excellent qualities of the working classes.*" She found to her surprise that they looked forward to her visits. (Above – Charlotte Barrington. Photo courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) No: X33238).

Charlotte and the widowed Lord Barrington were married in January 1905. Warmly welcomed by many members of the family she wrote, *"from the first moment of my introduction to Beckett I shared in the great appreciation and affection my husband always evinced for the old family home."* Lord Barrington with his new wife continued the famed hospitality for which Beckett was known, giving dinner Parties of 11 courses, for example, and regularly opening the grounds for such functions in the Summer as the Foresters Fete to which an invitation was extended to the Railway workers and their families in Swindon. At the same time they continued the tradition of, *"noblesse oblige"* (people with power and influence are obliged to help others.)

The longer Charlotte spent at Beckett visiting their tenants in the one and two bed-roomed cottages and saw the monotony and drudgery of village life with low wages and long working hours and few social activities, the more determined she became to revolutionise rural social life. A second reason was to stem the drift from the village away to Swindon where higher wages, more leisure facilities and shops were attractive. Her vision was to provide a Welfare Institute or a Village Hall. To think was to act and she actively started raising funds from her many friends in London having explained her project. The money came in quickly; the Red Cross donated £2,000 and in 1913 classes were started using an empty house in the village. The Girl Guides, Scouts and the forerunner of the WI began in Shrivenham. However, by 1915 Charlotte became aware of the problems of some of the returning injured soldiers from the Great War. She changed her focus to the building of cottages especially for the disabled men, usually of at least 30 to 40% disability, where they would be looked after by their families instead of being in an Institution. An extra feature for some of the houses built around the Recreation Ground and in the High Street was a workshop where a former serviceman could follow a trade by working when he felt well enough to support his family. This project became known as the Shrivenham Settlement Scheme and was enthusiastically supported by her London friends.

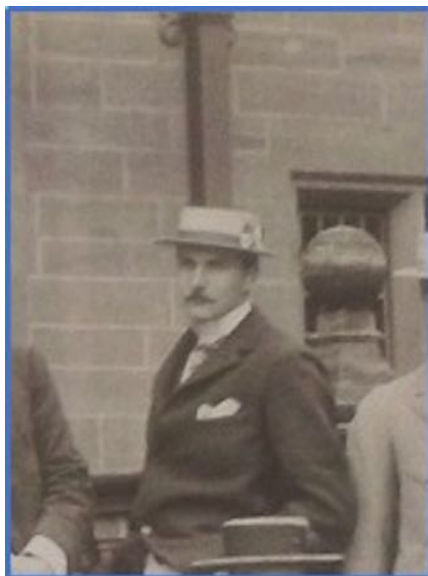
Meanwhile her determination to complete her original vision continued unabated. As with all the aspects of the houses in the Recreation Ground she was heavily involved in the planning of the Memorial Hall. She wished it to fit in with the architectural

character of the village and to complement the new houses. No detail was too small, and the Memorial Hall was completed in the early 1920s and officially opened by her friend Princess Beatrice on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1925. It soon became regularly used for meetings, badminton, dances and classes and clubs of all description. Where it was on the edge of the village when planned, it is now in the centre of Shrivenham. Charlotte lived at Beckett until her death in 1935. She lived long enough to see her Legacy to the village realised. (Below - The Memorial Hall, Shrivenham. Photo courtesy of Neil B. Maw).



At the end of her life Charlotte wrote an autobiography called, *'Through Eighty Years'* which she never saw in print. She died on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1935 and her son Henry Stopford Birch wrote a personal note to be inserted into the book and had it printed. Shrivenham Heritage Society has a copy, and it can also be read online on the Heritage Society's Catalogue Ref No: N78.

## William Reginald Shute Lord Viscount Barrington (10<sup>th</sup>) 1873 - 1960



Born in 1873 at Westbury, Buckinghamshire, William, or Bill as he was known, was the eldest son of the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount, Walter Bulkeley Barrington and his first wife Mary Isabella. He had two brothers and three sisters. At the age of 21 his parents had given him Medlar Cottage in Shrivenham as a hunting lodge being aware of his interest in farming and gardening. After leaving Cambridge he met the love of his life Violet who was married to his Cambridge friend Gordon Woodhouse. In the book, *"Violet"* Jessica Douglas-Home, writes about her aunt, the talented and passionate harpsichordist and clavichordist Violet Woodhouse. She describes Bill's family thus, *"they were glamorous looking and by every account devoted to each other. Bill was delicate as a child and thought to be vulnerable to TB. He had been educated privately in Switzerland. At Trinity Hall, Cambridge he devoted most of his time to cricket and athletics, avoiding any attempt at gaining a degree."* He is described as tall and thin, with golden hair, blue eyes and a classically handsome face. When William acquainted his friend Gordon with the news that he had fallen in love with Violet, Gordon asked him to move in with them in their home at Nether Lypiatt in Gloucestershire with his approval and was not upset by this arrangement.

Bill spent much of his spare time with Violet who led an unusual and Bohemian social life. A little later the *"ménage a trois"* increased with Maxwell Labouchere, a barrister

and wit, and the Hon Dennis Tollemache a young cavalry officer, to become, "*ménage a cinq*."

With her magnetic personality and precocious talent Violet drew well known artists, musicians and painters to her home at Nether Lypiatt. Among them were the three members of the artistic Sitwell family, Lady Christabel Aberconway, the art historian and collector of paintings who admired the charismatic Violet, and the composer Edith Smyth. In this environment the sensitive and artistic Bill thrived. His main interests were architecture and gardening. From time to time there were gatherings at Medlar Cottage Shrivenham. We learn from the book, "*Violet*" that Bill's mother, Mary Isabella died a painful death with cancer in 1903, and that his stepmother did not approve of his way of life.

At this time Bill was a part-time officer in the Militia, a reserve army of volunteers who signed up for six years to be trained in camps and sent on field manoeuvres perhaps for several weeks, ready for deployment in an emergency. In peacetime Bill as a Captain in the Oxfordshire Light Infantry could not, as a Reservist, be sent abroad. However, in 1914 he was sent to the trenches in France but spent the greater part of the war in India where he was at the attempted retreat at Kut.

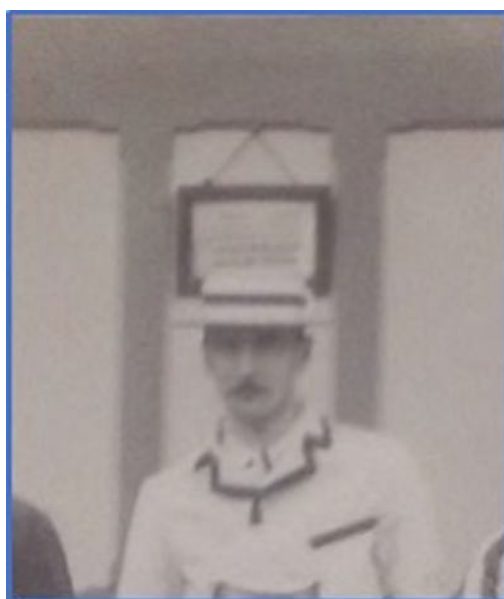
A document held in British Library dated 21<sup>st</sup> September 1945, gives some idea of his appreciation of his inheritance. He wrote to Lady Aberconway from 11 Mount Street, Mayfair, "*In Bath yesterday to inspect books and furniture. Basement flooded. My nice books from Beckett and Porchester Terrace were rotten, all the furniture falling to pieces. Glazed mouldings off the furniture on the floor. The plating was off the bronzes and they were broken.*" In a later letter he writes that he had, "*ordered a rather nice case for the Rex Whistler photographs. Will see it when made before sending it. Ordered one for Violet. Deeply depressed about my possessions. Had them done up and polished at one time. Now the books look like a dung heap, sodden and stinking & besmirched with mould. Forgive me for grumbling about things so near my heart*".

A further letter from the same address to Lady Conway, dated 21<sup>st</sup> December 1946 reads *“My darling Christabel, we don’t seem to have contacted much on our visit to London- we’ve all had streaming colds & now Violet has got it badly. Intend taking the road to Lypiatt on Monday where it will be disgustingly cold & I know she will at once want to return here.”* (BL ADD MS 57485 Folio 108). Several more letters to Christabel show his devoted love until Violet passed away on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1948. Bill moved out of Nether Lypiatt to a farm in Hartfield, Sussex where he spent his time farming before he died in 1960 at the age of 87.

When his father the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount died in 1933 Bill inherited only the title. The Beckett estate had been experiencing financial problems for the previous 20 years and twice Walter Bulkeley had attempted to sell it but in vain. On the death of Lady Barrington in 1935 the whole estate was sold to the War Office in 1937 and remains so to date (2024).

Bill had never married and when he died on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1960 the title passed to his nephew and heir, Patrick Barrington who as Executor carried out his instructions that he should be cremated in the simplest way without service, ceremony or flowers.

(Photo above & below. William Reginald Shute Barrington 1894 at Cambridge College. Photo courtesy of Antony Alderson).



## Patrick William Daines Lord Viscount Barrington (11<sup>th</sup>) 1908 - 1990



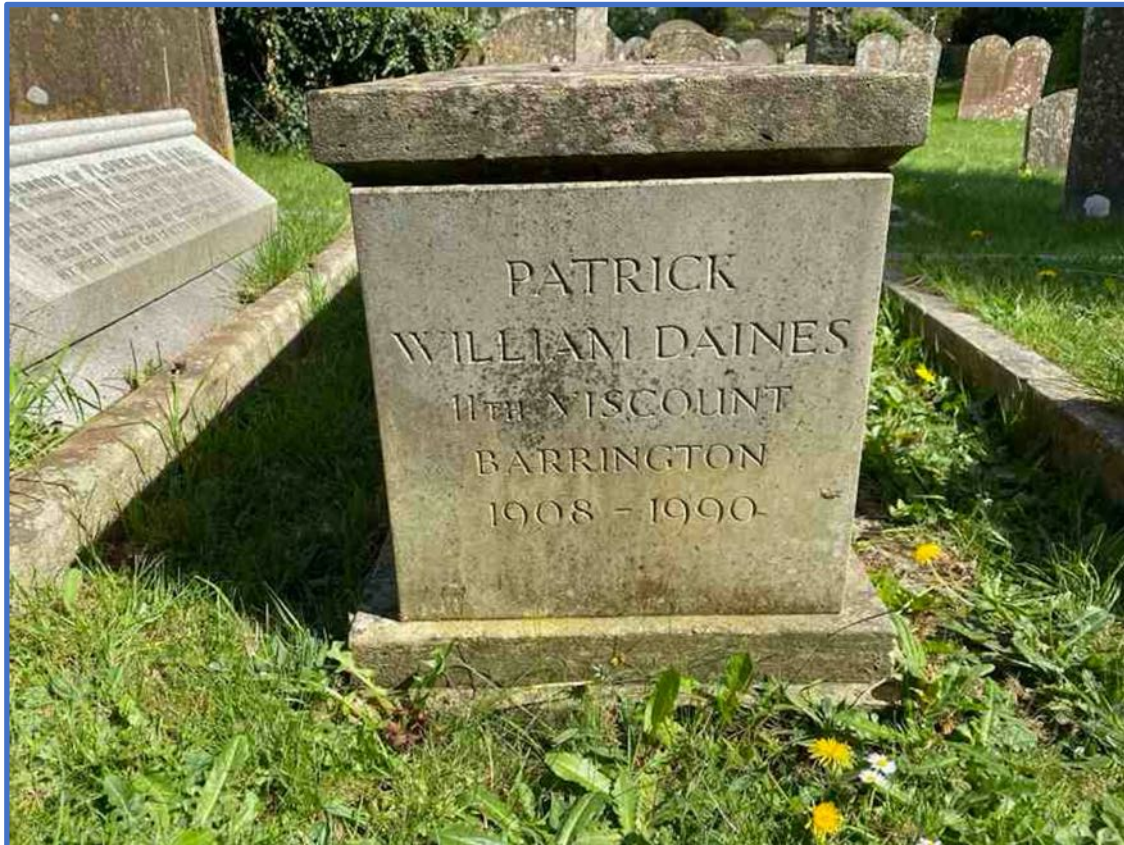
Patrick inherited the title on the death of his uncle, William the 10<sup>th</sup> Viscount, in 1960. He was the last Viscount Barrington. By this time the Beckett estate had been sold for over 25 years and from 1946 was the home of the Royal Military College of Science. (Above. Photo from the Times newspaper 11<sup>th</sup> April 1990).

Patrick was born to the Hon Walter Bernard Louis Barrington and Eleanor Nina Snagge on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1908. Educated at Eton as many members of the family were, he then went on to study at Magdalen College Oxford.

Soon after leaving Oxford he was a regular contributor to the magazine, "*Punch*" with his well-loved nonsense poems of which, "*The Diplomatic Platypus*" was very popular (SHS N678). From 1940 to 1945 he is recorded as working at the Mansion at Bletchley Park where he took part in decoding messages intercepted from the Germans and Japanese. Following his death on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1990 the Swindon Advertiser reported that



he had spent some of the latter part of his life working as a landscape gardener in South Africa. He remained a single man all his life and consequently had no children to inherit the titles of Baron Shute of Beckett, Viscount of Ardglass, Co Down and Baron Shute of Newcastle, Co Limerick. These titles then became extinct. (Below - the relatives of Patrick caused a stone to be affixed to the tomb memorial of Walter Bulkeley the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount at St Andrew's church, Shrivenham).



## The new Beckett House

Upon the death of the Bishop of Durham on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1826, his Will provided a fresh impetus to the building of the new mansion that had been talked about for many years. He bequeathed that £10,000 should immediately be made available to his nephew George (5<sup>th</sup> Viscount) to commence the work. But the Will was very complicated as he had huge amounts of money tied up in Trusts and Shares; therefore, completing the process of Probate was a long one. Also, George unfortunately died during a visit to Rome on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1829, aged 68. Therefore, it fell to his son William Keppel to complete the building of the new house. As well as the £10,000 the bishop had bequeathed to commence the new house, a further £20,000 was also allocated for the completion of it. The Will also instructed that the new house should be built, *“according to the plan for the same delivered to him by Mr Atkinson, an architect, and approved by him.”* This part of the bishop’s desire was not to come to fruition.

William Keppel Lord Viscount Barrington (6<sup>th</sup>) wasted no time in commencing the building of the new Mansion House. However, the plans he had in his possession created by William Atkinson were not favourably looked upon either by himself, his family or friends. Upon a visit to Beckett to see the old house and the plans, a friend of the Viscount was quoted as saying, *“Throw them both into the water and that will get rid of two damned ugly things at once.”* It was to his wife’s brother, the Hon. Thomas Liddell that the new Viscount turned for help. William described him as, *“A man of singularly good taste, who at once saw that, with caution, a sound deal might be made of the place. Mr Liddell has great natural abilities as an Architect, and kindly undertook to design plans for the erection of an Elizabethan House.”* (Lord George Barrington (7<sup>th</sup>) *History of Beckett House 1882*). A quote from a relatively local building company was requested, and Richard Pace & Son of Lechlade was contacted. It was this company that had built the new Vicarage in Shrivenham in 1805 for the Rev. Edward Berens. The quote was made out in detail and alluded to the erection of the house, but most of the interior detail would be carried out by the respective specialists of their field. (To see a copy of the quote please go to

Listing No N376 in the SHS Catalogue). (Below. The entrance elevation for William Atkinson's design, rejected by the 6th Viscount. BL ADD MS 73759).



In a letter written by family friend James Pringle of London, dated 1<sup>st</sup> September 1829, he stated that, "*Mr Richardson will leave town (London) tomorrow morning and will arrive at Faringdon about 5 o'clock.*" And from a letter written by the proprietor of the company Francis, White and Francis, dated 11<sup>th</sup> September 1829, makes clear who he is, "*The delivery of 4 Casks of Roman Cement will be delivered by direction of Mr John Richardson, Clerk of the Works to Your Lordship.*" Work began the following month when a young George Barrington, aged 5 years and 8 months, laid the first stone duly dated. And so began the erection of the new Beckett House in Elizabethan style, designed by Thomas Liddell and assisted by James Clapham and John Streat. The main contractor was Robert Pace & Son, the Head Plasterer was Mr Bass and the Head Carpenter was Mr Burchall. (*Br Lib MS 73757*). (Below. The Foundation Stone of 1829 and the Western end of the house today - 2023. Both photos by Neil B. Maw).



This note was found among the papers labelled as 'Misc loose accounts' (*Br Lib MS 73756*)

Account of Hands Employed at and for Beckett House - July 1830

Masons	Mr Knapp & Men	20
	Slaters	3
Labourers & Boys		27

Bath Masons Mr Clapham & Men	15
Labourers	6
Carpenters Mr Street & Men	23
Mr Haines & Men	6
Mr Pace & Men	6
Robert Sly	1
Sawyers, Tanners & Partners	4
Brick Makers Mr Palmer & Hands	27
Plumbers Mr Luker & Hands	3
Lime Burners Mr Ackrell & Hands	4
Quarry men at Lime Stone	7
Carters	7
Plasters	1
Labourers	<u>11</u>
	171

Bath stone and slate quarryys

Smiths Founders and Boatmen about 50 more

The construction of the main body of the house consisted of normal building bricks, but these were made on the estate. One of the legacies of the tenure of George Merryweather, Steward of the estate from 1815 to 1820, was the construction of a Brick Kiln and the knowledge of manufacture. Using clay extracted within the grounds of the estate, approximately one million, high quality bricks were made. These formed the skeleton of the house. The outside walls were then covered with quality stone from Bath that were delivered by barge via the Wilts and Berks Canal, to a wharf located on the southern edge of the estate by the road to Compton Beauchamp.

Whilst waiting for the new house to be built, Lord William Barrington and his family occupied the large house adjacent to St Andrew's Church, known today as Shrivenham House. The Dowager Lady Elizabeth Barrington who normally lived there, graciously agreed to move out by renting the nearby Watchfield House. (Below.

Watchfield House circa 1815 - probably painted by Ann Dixon. Courtesy of David Ferrand, Derbyshire).





By 1833 the rooms on the Western side of the house were sufficiently ready to be occupied and the Barringtons moved in, but it was not until around 1850 that the house was truly complete. (Below. Beckett House 2023. Photos by Neil B. Maw. In the snow – probably Mervyn Penny).







## The Hon Lady Augusta Barrington 1836 - 1915

Lady Augusta Barrington was the 6<sup>th</sup> child of the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount and his wife Jane Elizabeth Liddell and she was born at Beckett House. Although we don't know her exact date of birth we know that she was baptised in St Andrew's church, Shrivenham on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1836. She was sister to George, the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount and to Percy the 8<sup>th</sup> Viscount. Her four sisters were Mary Frances Sartoris, Charlotte Maria Bowes-Lyon, Caroline Susan Agar and Adelaide Balfour.

From her Memoirs written in 1906 in which she said, "*I want to try and write down everything I can remember about my dear mother. All she has ever told me herself and all that I have heard from others about that lovely and loveable life.*" We learn so much about different members of the Barrington family and the Liddells. We are indeed grateful for the wealth of information in her descriptions, the minutiae of daily life and the social history in this very well-connected family. Her mother was a Lady-in-waiting to Queen Adelaide, and this brought Augusta into social contact with the Royal Family from time to time. Her Memoirs contain frequent references to her friends from the aristocracy and their family links. For example, her sister Charlotte married the Earl of Strathmore and Augusta and her mother visited them at Glamis Castle. (*See SHS Listing No: N887 for a downloadable copy.*)

Augusta's main home was at Beckett which she loved. She described their London home in Cavendish Square, their frequent visits to the continent and to the many members of the Barrington family living in various parts of Britain as well as stays with friends. She seems to have had a slight handicap with her spine which might explain why she did not marry until she was 42 years old.

On 12<sup>th</sup> November 1878, to her great delight she became the second wife of William Dalrymple Maclagan who later became the Archbishop of York from 1891-1909. As Archbishop of York the Most Reverend Dr Maclagan christened Princess Mary, daughter of the Duke and Duchess of York in 1897 at the church of St Mary Magdalene

near Sandringham House. Later, in 1902, he crowned Alexandra of Denmark as Queen to King Edward at his coronation.

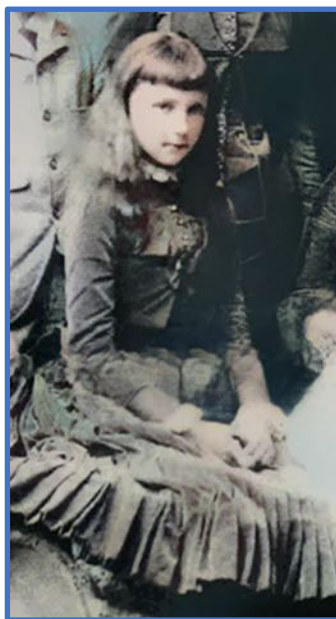
On her marriage to William Maclagan, Augusta was the beneficiary of a Trust set up by her mother. It was a common practice of the aristocracy to place money in a Trust to be used for the benefit of the new wife and then later for any children of the marriage. Augusta and her husband had two children, Eric Robert (1879 - 1951) and Theodora Jane (1881 - 1976). Eric was a scholar who was knighted and became the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Augusta died on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1915 at 15 Queen's Gate-Place, S.W. London. Her funeral took place on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1915 at Bishopthorpe, York, where she was buried under the east window of the church, with her husband who had died in 1910. (Below. Augusta Barrington, courtesy NPG Ax68100).



## Hilda Margaret Barrington 1873 - 1929

Preferring to be called Margaret, the Hon Hilda Margaret was the younger daughter and 4<sup>th</sup> child of the 9<sup>th</sup> Viscount, Walter Bulkeley Barrington and his first wife Mary Isabella. She was born in the family home at Westbury, Bucks on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1873. From the Memoirs of her husband, Major-General Sir Reginald Salmon Curtis we learn that as a young Army officer on duty in the area he was invited to dine with the Barringtons in the summer of 1893 at the Dower House in Shrivenham and introduced to, "*a tall, nice-looking girl of 19.*" He was instantly captivated by Margaret. Sir Reginald wrote that while he was waiting for the mass of troops to arrive for the exercise manoeuvres he was leading on the Berkshire Downs near Ashdown House, he regularly spent time at Beckett. A great activity was with Margaret painting scenery for the musical burlesque *Villilkins and Dinah* which they performed that December at Beckett House. The Memoirs reveal that on the last day of his time in the Ashdown area Sir Reginald wrote, "*called at Beckett and brought off the most successful coup of my life, being accepted by Miss Margaret Barrington.*" This says so much about their life-long relationship. They were married in Shrivenham Church the following April and honeymooned in Italy. Margaret accompanied him on the UK postings starting life as an Officer's wife in Aldershot. (Below. Hilda as a young girl).



In February 1895 Diane, their first child, was born after a traumatic confinement. The baby was healthy and christened in Shrivenham Church. However, Margaret's health was severely impaired for the next 10 years. The Memoirs mention her being in a bathchair. Despite this she managed to accompany her husband on his South Africa posting after the end of the Boer War. Margaret was overjoyed to discover after a surgical operation in South Africa she regained her former health. Sir Reginald commented that this operation had a most surprising effect for she went on to give birth two years later in Pretoria to twin daughters, Rosdew and Ivy who were born on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1908.

The Barrington family were very well connected and earlier in her life Margaret had met Lord Kitchener. In Pretoria she met him again and heard about the scheme to build a new maternity home. She did not hesitate to contribute £12,000 towards this project. This suggests she was a lady who knew her own mind and was used to handling her own money. Margaret died in 1929, having been a widow for 7 years. She was buried in St Andrew's Churchyard, Shrivenham, among other Barringtons. (Below).



**Major-General Sir Reginald Salmond Curtis KCMG, CB, DSO,  
husband of Hilda Margaret Barrington**



Sir Reginald was born on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1853 and we are indebted to his grandson Dr. A P Regnier for allowing us to read his Grandfather's Memoirs for the information about his life. Sir Reginald was the husband of Hilda Margaret Barrington, who preferred to be known as Margaret. (Above. NPG x166944).

Margaret's husband who retired from his very successful Army career as a Major-General was born at Shoeburyness in Essex in 1863 and was the eldest son of Major-General and Marianne Curtis. He entered the Woolwich Military Academy after school in Cheltenham and obtained his first commission when he was 20.

Sir Reginald was a British Army Officer responsible for the re-organisation and modernisation of the Royal Engineers during the Great War (1914 - 1918). After an exemplary career in South Africa during the second Boer War of Independence 1899 - 1902, where he was ADC to the Engineer-in-Chief and later appointed Assistant Director of Telegraphs, he was able to apply his knowledge and experience of handling over 500,000 men to good use to suit the advance of science, applied to war.

In his service in South Africa, he met the young Major R.S. Baden-Powell who later founded the Boy Scout movement. At the time Sir Reginald was heavily involved in laying Telegraph wires across virgin terrain to facilitate communication and was using a 7-8 feet long pole, to measure distances to pole-jump over swamps and streams. The pole was notched in feet and inches to transmit measurements. Baden-Powell thought this was extremely good and this very pole was later adopted as the Boy Scouts Pole. Sir Reginald died in 1910 at West Farleigh, Kent.



## Beckett Estate – the Park and Farms

The scope of this section is to give an understanding of the size and shape of the estate and the farms that belonged to it. The historical roots of it are difficult to determine with any accuracy, so it may be as well to use the estate map of 1815 as a reference. The Steward of the Beckett Estate at that time was George Merryweather and he commissioned the drawing of two maps in order that Lord Barrington might have a copy as well as himself. With his Lordship holding the Living as Rev. George Barrington in Sedgefield, near Durham, this enabled his steward to refer to points on the map within the contents of his frequent letters. The 1815 estate map is an accurate representation of the general layout of the estate and the village of Shrivvenham. By comparing the maps of the farms commissioned by William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup>) in 1771, (RBA D/EX 1424/1) it is apparent that very little change had taken place. Therefore, the use of the 1815 map seems prudent and convenient.





The above section of the estate map shows what was at one time Beckett Park in its entirety. The open field in the middle numbered 104 was anciently quite likely to have been a Deer Park. The section below shows the old house and its immediate gardens surrounding it. The circular feature just to the south of the house is, '*The Rosary*,' constructed by Thomas Wright circa 1754. (See SHS No N777 for detail). To the left of the Rosary is the lake, fed by the water below that is a natural stream, the course of which has been shaped to create an island. In view is also a formal garden and the area above that was known as, '*The Wilderness*.'" The object shaped like a fork to the north of the house is another lake that flows through two exits. Just outside the Park area in the north is the Stables that were built in 1766.



For some reason the structure known as the Fishing House, and various other names, is missing from the map. It is located to the left of the Rosary where the road crosses the lake.



The earliest documentary evidence we have for this building is from 1722, where it is described as a *'Summerhouse being a cubed 24 feet built by Inigo Jones.'* (RBA. E/EEL/35/17.) We have no evidence yet to confirm when it was built or by whom.

There are numerous documentary references to the beauty of the Beckett Estate. No doubt every family that ever owned it would have added their mark. Many exotic plants and trees have come and gone around the park. From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was opened on an annual basis for the summer fetes. The local newspaper reported on many occasions of the festivities that were held there as well as the horticultural shows. The Swindon Advertiser newspaper dated 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1878, mentioned, *'The noble owner 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 spray is out of place, and the utmost credit is due to the gardener, Mr Meades.'*

Of the farms that belonged to the estate we can again use the 1815 map as below.

The Key to the farms as follows.

A - Galleyherns Farm. Still same

B - Lower Broadleaze Farther Farm. A stone wall marks where the farmhouse once stood

C - Lower Broadleaze Farm. Now Broadleaze Farm

D - Upper Broadleaze Farm. No longer exists as a separate farm

E - Oxleaze Farm. Now Home Farm

F - Homeleaze Farm. Now part of the Military College. Farmhouse demolished

G - Beckett House & Grounds. Now part of the Military College

H - Stainswick Farm. Still same

I - Cowleaze Farm. Still same

J - Stallpits Farm. Still same

K - Pennyhooks Farm. Still same

Sandhill Farm in between Stallpits and Pennyhooks, probably went into the possession of the Barrington estate in 1799. (*SHS N995*).



The Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal passes through the southern edge of the estate as shown on the map above. The wharf used by the estate management was located at the intersections of farms E, C and D. It was used extensively to receive dressed stone from Bath for the new mansion house in 1829, and to ship the produce of the Lime Kiln (See SHS Listing No 1547.)

In 1817 the road that crossed the estate close to Beckett House, bound for Longcott, was re-routed to the position it occupies today. The map below shows the course of the new road on the estate map.



# The Engagement Diaries of William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington

(2<sup>nd</sup>) 1777 – 1792 (*BL ADD MS 73704 – 73719*)

By Vivien Moss

On my first trip to the British Library, I felt a thrill as I undid the clasp of the 250-year-old leather bound Diary and perused the 18<sup>th</sup> century script which was not too difficult to read. I was holding a personal belonging of the peri-wigged, conscientious 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount where he had meticulously recorded his Engagements both in London, Beckett and elsewhere. However, soon after transcribing the dates and places I felt disappointed and frustrated that there were no details of his thoughts and reasons for contact with any of the many, many people mentioned in the 12 Diaries. It was difficult to make out who were the friends, the colleagues and the neighbours. So began a journey into the past. It was akin to putting together a large jig-saw puzzle. (Below. One of the leather-bound diaries used by William Barrington).



The Diaries themselves cover the period 1777 – 1792. In order to understand some of the terse engagement entries I needed to do some background reading. “*An Eighteenth-Century Secretary at War*” edited by Tony Hayter for the Army Records Society in 1988

provided many facts. In addition, there were many letters written to and by the Viscount as Secretary at War during the 18 years he held that position. Cracrofts Peerage gave details about the many Lords he met, along with where they lived and the Lady Augusta Barrington, his great granddaughter, contributed family recollections of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount in her Memoirs. It was necessary to understand the causes and progress of the Seven Years War and in addition to have some knowledge of the American War of Independence and the loss of the colonies.

The 13 Diaries (covering the period 1777 - 1791 but without 1786, 1790 and 1791) show brief entries for almost every day. The first two Diaries, 1777 and 1778 cover, the last two years of his working life while the remaining eleven give some information about his retirement. Until then he had enjoyed his career in politics despite some acrimonious debates. He was respected as hard working and meticulous in all he did. All his Diaries listed above show his movements on where he ate and slept and whom he met but not why. Unusually, there is a gap in his entries between the middle of January 1778 to 17 April 1778. An interesting entry for that period, but a bitter time for him, points to a heavy workload with "*long day in the House*" and "*forgot*" and "*not entered from great business.*" The American War of Independence had begun in 1776 and William became increasingly frustrated by political and military struggles. Where, as Secretary at War with weekly access to the King, his advice in the Seven Years War from 1756 had been welcomed as sound, in 1777 it was ignored by Lord North the Prime Minister. An example of this was when Burgoyne's catastrophic defeat at Saratoga led to the loss of 6,500 men because of the ambiguous orders of the Army commanders. The Secretary at War was not part of the decision-making process as regards policy for deploying the Army and the Navy. His role was purely financial, advising how many Battalions, equipment and quartering that Britain could support. At the age of 61 he asked to be retired. King George III had a very high opinion of him and was reluctant to let him go. The King's letter to William in 1778 reads, "*I intend to shew (sic) him a mark of my approbation of his conduct*" and awarded him a pension of £2,000 a year. (Below. The certificate from the King granting William Barrington a pension of £2000 per annum in 1778. Photo courtesy of Antony Alderson).



Lancaster House Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> 1776

Lord Burrington cannot be surpris'd at my having  
experienc'd his attachment, and faithful discharge of  
the employments he hath held for eighteen years of  
my Reign, he's to be surpris'd at having this day consented  
to his retreat, but as I intend to show him a mark of  
my approbation of his conduct, arising from that  
consideration alone, and unobtain'd by him, I choose to  
take this method of acquainting him that I have  
directed Lord North to have a Warrant prepared  
granting a Pension of two thousand pounds per annum  
untill he shall be appointed to some other employ  
Lord Burrington may rest assur'd that he will  
always be esteem'd by Me.

George III.

Throughout the 13 Diaries, William makes frequent visits to his well-loved home of Beckett. Travelling by horse drawn post-chaise he would have been unable to complete the journey to Beckett from his home in Cavendish Square in London in one day. He would often stop overnight at Mongewell, the home of his brother Bishop Shute Barrington who was then Bishop of Salisbury. Another overnight stay was at Caversham Park, the home of William Cadogan, the 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Cadogan. Such stays were about 3 or 4 times a year. Mongewell was a mansion dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century and Caversham Park was 2,400 acres when recorded in the Domesday Book and had a mile-long drive to the house. It seems it was a feature of the aristocracy to keep open house for friends and family at any time. Another feature of the aristocracy was the understated sense of national duty with the inborn belief that the privileges of high rank are paid for through service, perhaps by standing as Members of Parliament, or being part of the Judiciary, or making the Army a career and often a combination of any two of these. It was interesting to note in the Diaries that nearly all the names of the men mentioned in his London life were politicians, often holders of high Office, and all with titles. Similarly, in his life at Becket he frequently met other members of

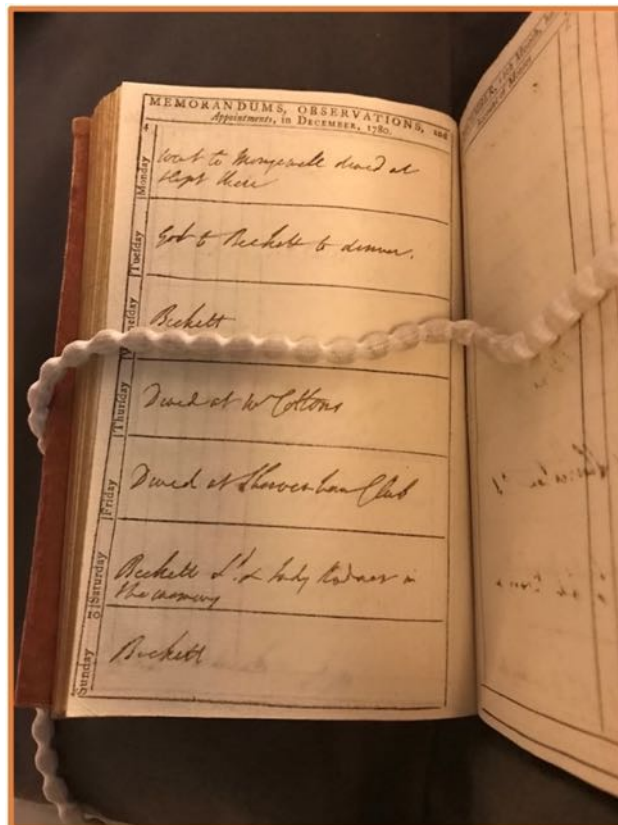


the landed gentry either at Beckett or at their country homes in a radius of 30 miles. In fact, according to the diaries, it seems that William moved only in the upper echelons of society. In January 1778 he dined at Lord Waldegrave's, two days later he dined at Lord Harrington's. General Waldegrave was a politician, a soldier and an Earl while Lord Harrington was a former Secretary of State who as General William Stanhope was the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl. At Beckett that year on the 12<sup>th</sup> August he dined with the impoverished Lord Warneford at Sevenhampton (*then known as Sennington.*)

At Beckett it is clear that he enjoyed the company of the Vicar the Rev Barfoot Colton because within a day or two of returning from London the Diaries often show that he "*dined at the Coltons.*" Always when he was at Beckett the Coltons dined with him regularly. The two men were well educated, and their professions made them the pillars of the community. It is not too surprising that they were friends. In the village at that time there would have been few who could read or write.

After he resigned as Secretary at War in 1778, he continued to spend his time almost equally between his home in Cavendish Square and Beckett. In Shrivenham he was a regular diner of the Shrivenham Club held on Saturday. But there are no details of where the Club was located. (Possibly a separate room at the Barrington Arms). Apart from a brief spell in 1782 as Post-Master General he held no more public office and retired from politics at the end of 1782. In both London and at Beckett his Diaries show that he kept up a wide circle of friends, continued to pay his subscription to the Opera Club in Town, dined at the exclusive White's, went to the Opera or Playhouse occasionally as on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1778, and frequently met Lords, Huntingdon, Harrington and Hillsborough. An entry in, "*An Eighteenth-Century Secretary at War,*" Tony Hayter describes him as a "*private and evasive man with shortcomings and numerous enemies.*" He was happy to serve and obey his Monarch regardless of a change of Government. An entry for 13<sup>th</sup> June 1778 shows Harley with a query mark. Did this mean he was to see Lord Harley, 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Oxford or did it mean he was going to see his brother the Admiral Samuel who had a house in Harley Street.? The three entries for 11<sup>th</sup> -13<sup>th</sup> January 1778, 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1<sup>st</sup> July, and 17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> July the same year when Hill Park is mentioned also give rise to speculation. It is possible that there was a residential stay

in Marble Hill Park, an elegant Palladian Mansion near Richmond, for Politicians to discuss events of national importance, for at this time the future of the 13 American Colonies was causing great problems for Lord North's administration. (Below. An entry to the enigmatic 'Shrivenham Club.' BL ADD MS 73704).



In *"the Political Life of William Wildman Barrington"* compiled from original papers, Bishop Shute Barrington in 1815 writes, *"early, constant habit of living in elevated society"* led to a *"suavity of manners that was strikingly admirable."* He was friendly, affectionate and honourable.

William's later engagement diaries give a few sketchy details when he spent more time at Beckett. He got increasingly involved with local affairs such as the Assizes at Abingdon, decisions about road making in Faringdon on October 1779 but he still maintained contact with his London friends. He mentioned going to Plays, Balls and

dining with friends. It may be that he too, saw the great Actress of Tragedy, Sarah Siddons, in the late 1780s, as we know that she was a friend of Elizabeth Adair who later married the 5th Viscount Barrington. He enjoyed the company of Lady Harrington on occasions in London and once or twice at Beckett. We know there were two major issues that concerned him in his retirement. One was personal and involved the matter of who was going to inherit Beckett after his death. The other related to law and order.

In 1740 William married Mary Grimston, widow of the Hon Samuel Grimston. There were two children from the marriage but sadly one died after four years and the other only a few hours. Mary died in 1764. William knew that when he died his title would pass to the eldest son of his late brother John, but this was loaded with difficulties. (*See section above on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Viscounts.*)

The Diaries show that in the 1770s and 1780s Daines, Samuel and the Bishop came to Beckett and the dates of their meetings concur with some of the dates of the 6 codicils attached to the Viscount's Will. It is interesting to find that on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1787 a Mr Drummond arrived at Beckett and stayed for 3 days. On 10<sup>th</sup> April, "*Mr Drummond, Hoare and Williams went away.*" Mr Robert Drummond of Cadlands House in the New Forest and on the Solent, was a Banker and Mr Hoare was also a Banker. It suggests that the Viscount was seeking to put his affairs into order. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1787 he dined in London with Mr H. Drummond; this was followed by a short visit to Cadlands in July the same year. In Lady Augusta's Memoirs there is mention of Drummonds as the Bankers of the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount.

The second concern was to do with law and order. There is no record of how William viewed the French Revolution in 1789 and how this may have affected his outlook. Earlier, William, as Secretary at War, had feared riots and disorder in the towns and country. The food riots of the mid-century in which clashes with soldiers, several deaths, the burning of mills and victorious mobs rampaging in London and in 20 counties were frightening and showed the lack of cohesion between military and civil law. It appears that because he kept in regular contact with many of the influential

families in the area in his retirement William was promoting interest among the propertied men within a radius of 40 miles from Beckett in maintaining a parish militia which would respond immediately to local unrest and hopefully quell it with little cost to the community. It may even be that he enjoyed socialising frequently. Lord Throckmorton at Buckland House, Lord Faringdon at Buscot House, Lord Bathurst at Cirencester Park, Sir Henry Pye at Faringdon House and among many others the Pleydell-Bouveries at Coleshill House appear in the diary and interestingly, Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie was appointed deputy lieutenant for Wiltshire in 1780 and the Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire. The owner of Watchfield House, Mr Blagrove, visited Beckett from time to time in October 1785 and again in April 1792. In addition to the local landed gentry the Viscount visited and received at Beckett Thomas Thynne, 1st Marquess of Bath who lived at Longleat; in April 1787, Lord and Lady Freke of Hannington Hall stayed at Beckett for a few days; Carswell, where Robert Southby MP, lived is mentioned several times, and in August 1783 William dined with Mr Goddard in Swindon. Extended family members called, usually for three days; the Craven girls from Uffington visited and stayed in August 1792 and Barrington-Price featured frequently. His father-in-law was the Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne.

An interesting entry in the Diary of 1792 showed that he paid £2,954 into the Exchequer at Marble Hill on the 6<sup>th</sup> April. This was more than a year's pension and referred to his time as Treasurer of the Navy when accounts were notoriously slow to be made up and took years to complete. The Treasurer at the time was liable to pay any shortage from his own personal account.

Throughout the 13 Diaries it's obvious that William was a very active and sociable man. He entertained frequently at Beckett House and often visited family, friends and former colleagues. His abiding interest was his Beckett Estate and he openly admitted to perhaps spending a little too much money on it.

## The Barrington Burial Vault at St Andrew's Church, Shrivenham



This explanation of the Vault begins with when it was built. The Hon Mary Grimston (nee Lovell) became a widow on the death of her first husband the Hon Samuel Grimston in 1737. She then married William Wildman Lord Viscount Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup>) on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1740. She was a self-assured lady and made pre-nuptial agreements at the beginning of both marriages. In 1741 Mary gave birth to daughter Rothesia Anne, but she died of Smallpox four and a half years later. She gave birth to a son William Hill in 1743, but he died soon after birth. By 1761 Mary would have been approximately 50 years of age, her date of birth is not certain but thought to be around 1710. She clearly felt the need to make a Will and proceeded to do that on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1761. She went into detail about how she should be prepared after her death before being buried ... *'in the vault which I have built under the porch of the parish church.'* The instructions continued, *'And I also order and direct that the bodies of my dear girl Rothesia Anne Barrington and of my son William Hills Barrington be removed from the vault under Audley Street Chapel (London) where they now lie and be carried down in a separate hearse from mine and deposited in the vault under Shrivenham church porch.'*

In 2020, work at the church of St Andrew's caused a mechanical excavator to break into the side wall of what appeared to be an underground chamber. Investigation identified it as being a burial vault. Local historian Margaret Andrews visited the site and discovered that there were two chambers and carried out a complete survey (most photos below courtesy of Margaret) and her plans show that the original chamber was built to the same orientation and dimensions as the church porch above, making it highly likely that they were constructed at the same time.

Within the porch of the church there is a royal coat of arms to King George the III, and significantly, it is dated 1764. It has been noted by some church historians that it is unusual to mount a royal insignia in the church porch. Lady Mary Barrington died in September 1764, and it is likely that her husband, William Viscount Barrington, who had a strong working relationship with the King, caused this gesture of the royal coat of arms to be situated in the new porch that had been commissioned by his wife. The King's reign began in 1760 and yet it's 1764 that is appended to the insignia. This would seem to confirm that the porch was built at the same time as the vault, but when?



The documentary evidence confirms that the vault and porch must have been built between 1745 (death of Rothesia) and 1761 (writing of the Will). A study of many Wills of the period showed a trend of an average of writing a Will within five years before dying. Until more accurate evidence is discovered we can suggest from this a build date of 1755 - 1760.

Lady Barrington's Will makes further interesting reading concerning her late children, *'And I do hereby desire that the persons that help to remove the bodies of my children from the hearse to the vault be such as have had the Smallpox and that it be done about eleven of the clock at night and for their trouble I give them two Guineas. And my will is that the hearse and the bodies of my children be locked in the coach house at Beckett immediately on their arrival and no person permitted to go to them but those who drive them to church and put them in the vault for fear of infection and that the coach house be fumigated after their removal before any use is made of it.'* It's to her credit that she was thinking of the safety of others, but her grief was evident ... *'And I also order and direct that my Executors cause a Monument to be set up in the left-hand corner at the entrance of Shriovenham church near the opening of my vault (in case I shall not have ordered one before my decease it is not found in the vault ready to be erected) but I would not have the expense thereof [estimated] £50 and I order and direct the following inscription be engraved thereon.'*

To  
The Memory of the Honourable  
Rothesia Anne Barrington  
Who departed this life  
March 20<sup>th</sup> 1745  
Aged 4 years 7 months & 20 days  
It may with the strictest  
Truth be said of this infant  
That she was a Jewel of  
Inestimable Value  
Just shown to the world  
And then  
Put up again



Also

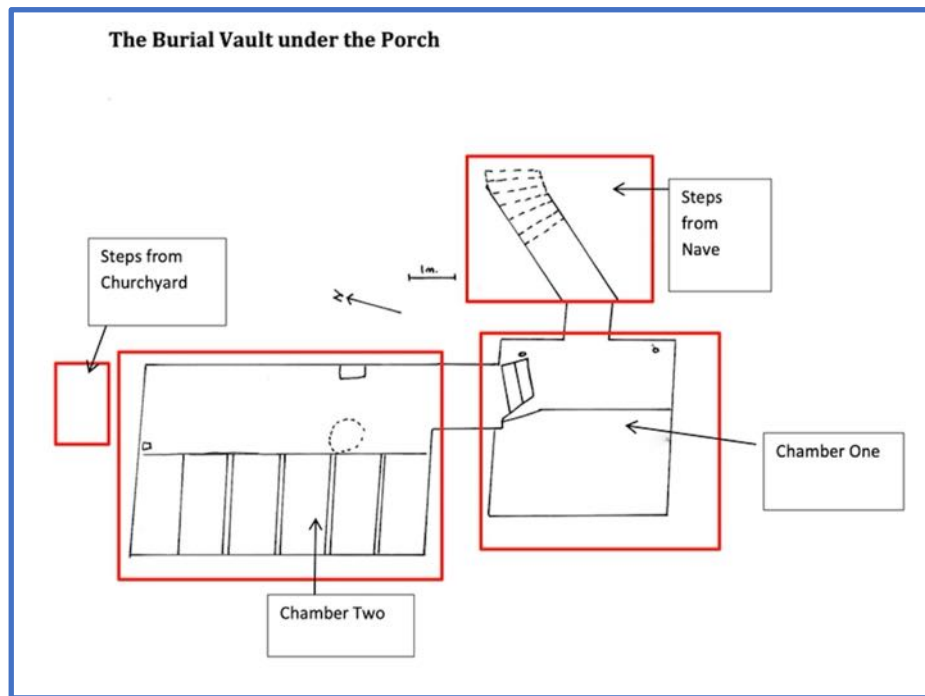
In the same vault  
Near this place  
Lies the body of  
William Hills Barrington (infant)  
Her brother

And

Mary Viscountess Barrington  
Their Mother  
By whose direction  
This monument & inscription  
Were placed here

The entry in the Nadfas book (No14) confirmed that the actual wording used after Mary's death was considerably shorter than she directed in her Will. She was clearly still grief stricken at the loss of her children. One further piece of information that came from the vault survey was a name plate describing that William Hills had survived only four hours after birth.

We learn from the Survey that there are two chambers, one built by Lady Barrington (Chamber 1) and another in 1841 (Chamber 2). There are eight coffins in Chamber 1 and four in Chamber 2. It may be convenient to go through the occupants in chronological order, but not for each individual coffin.



There are two coffins in chamber 1 who's occupants could not be clearly identified, but research has pointed to likely candidates. The first is Francis Barrington, who in his Will, John Lord Viscount Barrington (1<sup>st</sup>) called his second son. His date of birth is not clear but must have been soon after his older brother William Wildman who was born on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1717 and became the second Viscount. The Parish Burial Register recorded Francis as 30<sup>th</sup> September 1736, which means that he was aged about 19 when he died. William held a strong loyalty and affection for his family and would have taken a keen interest in his wife's building of the family vault circa 1755, and it's quite possible that he arranged for his brother's exhumation and reinterment in the vault.

Admiral Samuel Barrington was interred in the vault on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1800. (Below. The Admiral's coffin). He was a remarkable man, and his military exploits and affable character make for interesting reading which can be read above and on SHS Listing No: N86.



The candidate for the second unknown is likely to be more accurate and is Arthur Decimus Barrington who died on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1826 aged 11. He was one of the 15 children of George, the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount and Elizabeth Barrington. His name is listed in the Parish Burial Register and there was no memorial stone found for him during the survey of the Churchyard by Shrivenham Heritage Society, and there surely would have been if he was buried there.

Two of the coffins in Chamber 1 had legible name plates. Maria Jane Bowes Barrington was the wife of Russell Barrington, another son of the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount. She died on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 1871, aged 57 and was interred into the vault on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Her son Francis Lyon Barrington was born in 1834 and died aged 43. He was interred in the vault on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1877. (His coffin below).



The Memoirs of Augusta Barrington explained the need for Chamber 2. Upon the death of her grandmother in 1841, the Dowager Elizabeth Barrington, widow of George the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount, she explained that *'When the family vault was opened to receive her remains it was found to be full of water. It was also nearly full, (of coffins) so my Father caused a new vault to be made, outside instead of under the Church porch. It contains twelve recesses, in the first of which my grandmother rests, with my father and mother immediately above her.'* Augusta's father was William Keppel Barrington (6<sup>th</sup> Viscount) and it was he who commissioned the construction of Chamber 2. And one of the workmen kindly left an engraving for us looking in 180 years later. (Below)



It's interesting to note that Maria Jane Bowes and her son Francis Lyon were placed in Chamber 1, when in the new Chamber 2 were placed the wife of the 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount, the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount and his wife, and the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount mentioned below. Was hierarchical priority being given to the new chamber? And even though Augusta stated that there were 12 recesses (there were in fact 18) only the four people mentioned above were in them. The 1850s and 1860s were periods of Victorian splendour for the manorial upper classes, who no doubt had a vision of a Barrington dynasty lasting for many more centuries - but it would fall apart in only half of one.

The last person to be interred in the Barrington family vault was George William Lord Viscount Barrington (7<sup>th</sup>). He had died suddenly whilst attending a shooting party at Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire. His funeral took place 16<sup>th</sup> November 1886 and was attended by a large number of mourners. There is a detailed description which can be read in SHS Listing No: N857. The coffin was described as of solid oak (Below - top right) with massive brass furniture and coronet, with plate bearing the inscription:

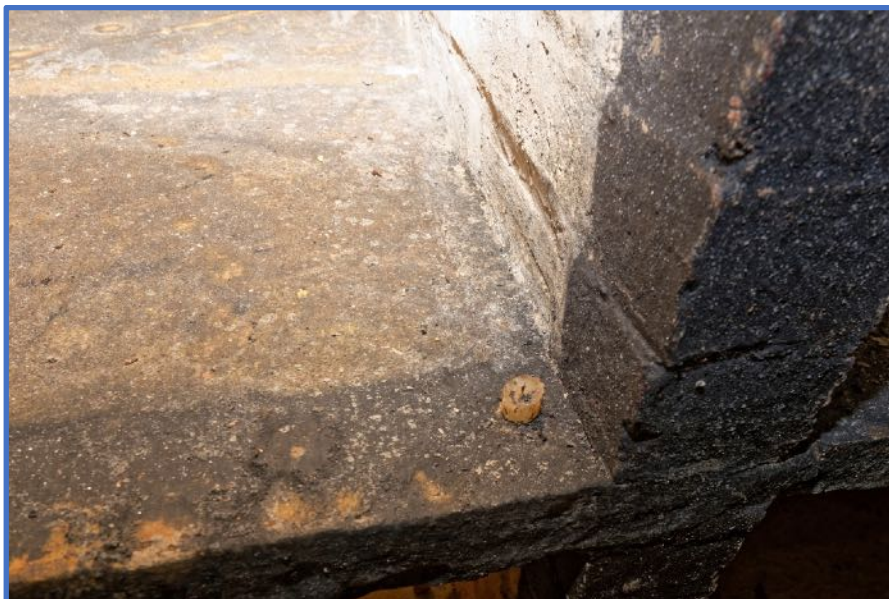
George William  
7<sup>th</sup> Viscount Barrington  
Born 14<sup>th</sup> February 1824  
Died 6<sup>th</sup> November 1886





There is nothing written within church or Barrington documents as to why the vault stopped being used. There was plenty of space available in Chamber 2 (see above) but it's likely that flooding problems persisted and living family members were perhaps put off by the thought of entering an aquatic eternity.

(Below) The spot where the candles were placed by the workmen, clearly marked, with one left behind. Perhaps the last one as they sealed it up for good?







Beckett House.

Above: The Old in 1812.

Below: The New in 2019

(Artist unknown)

(Photo by Neil B. Maw)





The front of Beckett House and the China House. (Photos by Neil B. Maw)

