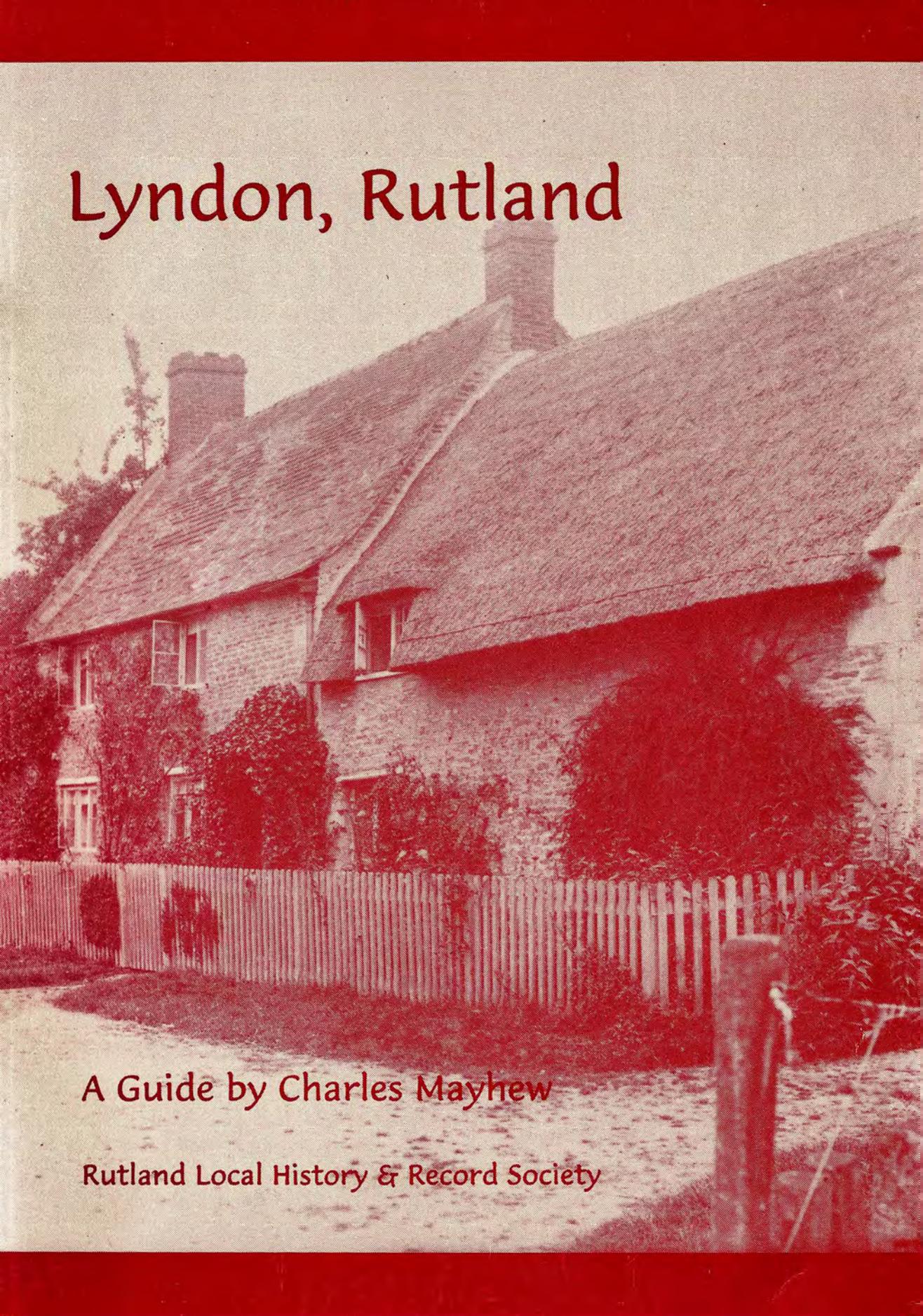
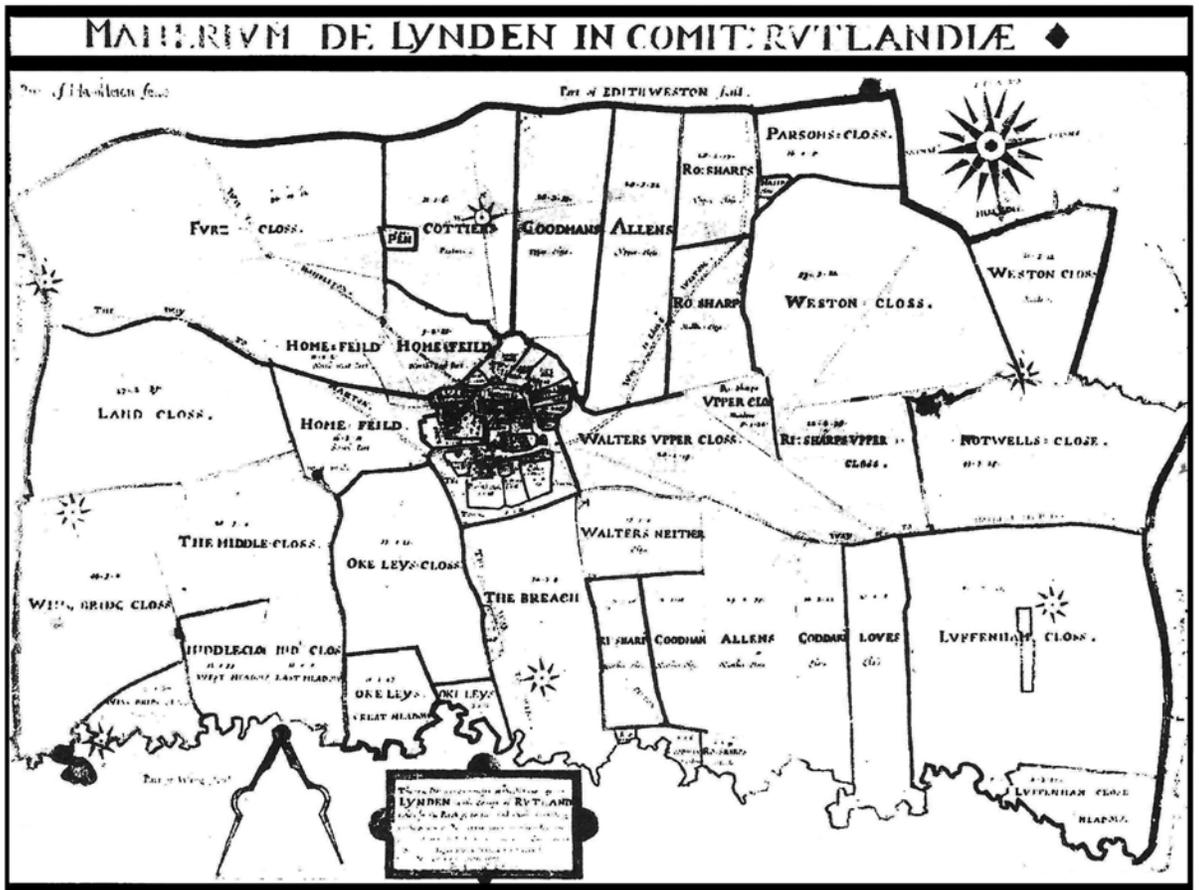


Lyndon, Rutland



A Guide by Charles Mayhew

Rutland Local History & Record Society



Frontispiece: The Manor of Lyndon in 1663, as it was when the Barker family bought the estate (Sir John Conant/B & E Nichols)

Cover illustration: Cottages in Lyndon village, photographed by Dalby's of Stamford early in the twentieth century (Rutland County Museum).

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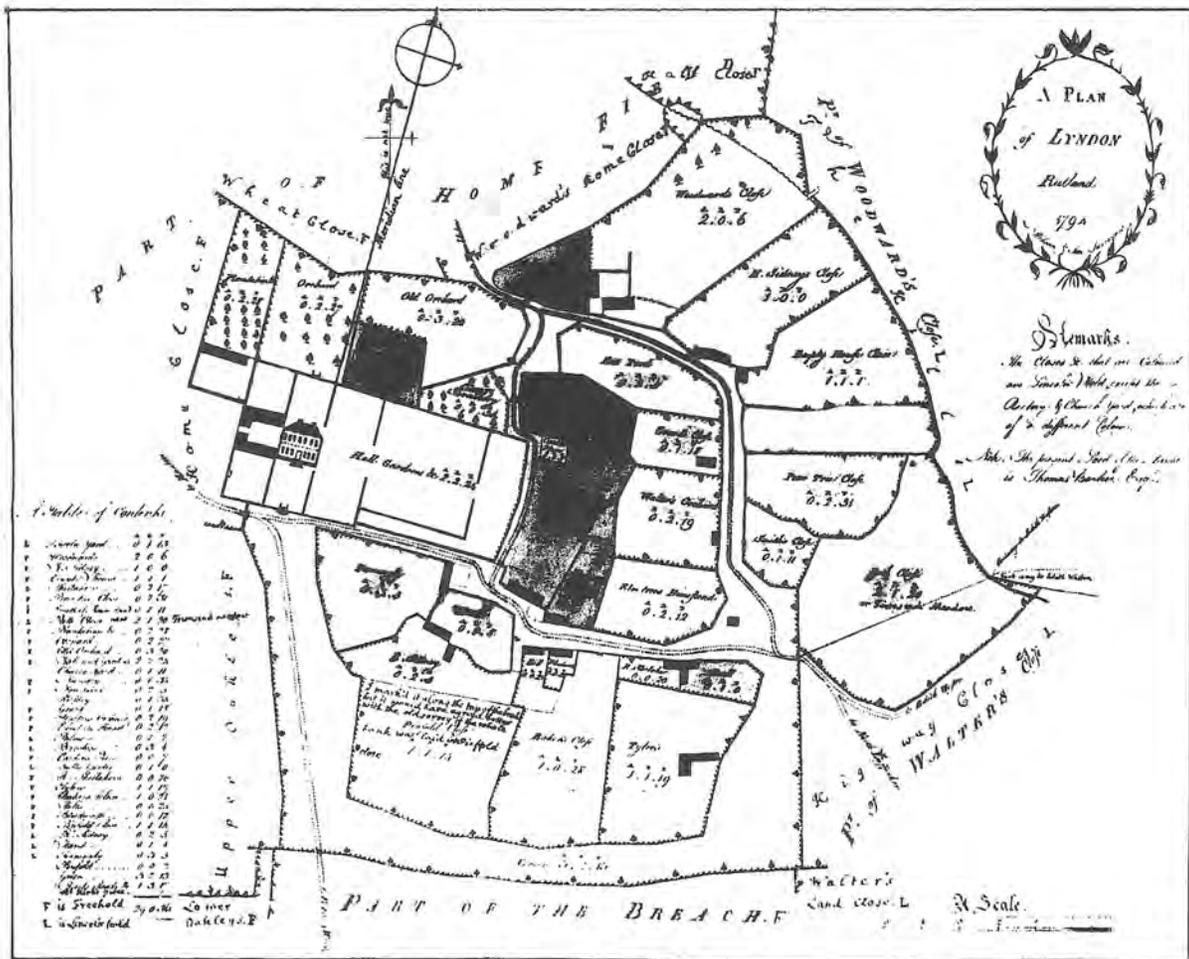


Fig. 1. The village of Lyndon as shown in an estate map of 1794 (Sir John Conant/B & E Nicholls).

A unique Rutland Village

Lyndon is located about five miles south-east of Oakham, the county town of Rutland. Although it appears as a secluded rural backwater, in fact dramatic landscape changes have occurred here. In the 1970s, the valleys to the north of the village were flooded to create Rutland Water, the largest lowland reservoir in Britain. A potential threat to flood the valley of the river Chater to the south was averted. Now the area is a major recreational focus and there is a nature reserve, sailing club, cycling centre, golf course, &c, only a mile or so from Lyndon. At Wing, a mile to the south, there is the Anglian Water treatment works distributing water to various parts of the east Midlands. Only two miles eastwards is St George's Barracks at Edith Weston, with all its associated facilities and large married quarters, which has recently replaced an RAF station.

Not only is Lyndon significant due to landscape changes, but it also has a distinctiveness due to personalities who have lived there. The Barker family of Lyndon Hall were influential in the area from 1513 onwards as MPs and Sheriffs. Samuel Barker (1686-1759) was a noted Hebrew scholar. However, it is Thomas Barker (1722-1809), the father of English meteorology, and William Whiston (1667-1752), divine, philosopher and mathematician, who make this village unique in Rutland. Additionally, the diary and scrapbook of the Revd T K B Nevinson gives a special insight into village life in the nineteenth century.

And yet, with all this interest, little or nothing has been written for the wider public. The intention here is to draw together much of this information and to make it available for visitors to the village and its church. There are no pretensions to this being a definitive or comprehensive village history, but rather one hopes that it will trigger interest and further study, and provide an awareness of the potential within what seems at first to be an "ordinary" little English village.

*Bryan Waites
Oakham, Pentecost 1999*



Fig. 2. Lyndon Hall as it was in the 1920s, seen from the south (Rutland County Museum).



Fig. 3. Lyndon Top Hall, at a similar date (Rutland County Museum).

The Village Scene

The name Lyndon first appears in the Pipe Rolls of 1167. The place name is Anglo-Saxon in origin, deriving from the words *lind*, meaning lime tree, and *dun*, meaning hill, combining to mean Lime Tree Hill.

Victoria County History records that Lyndon is a parish of 911 acres. The highest point is on the northern boundary towards Manton at 400 feet above sea level, and along this boundary there are fine views over Rutland Water. The level falls to 200 feet on the southern boundary along the River Chater. "The subsoil", so runs the account, "is upper lias and inferior oolite: the surface soil varies. In digging a trench in 1780 to lay a drain, talc was found in the stiff blue clay, and there are ancient stone pits."

In medieval times the village would have been in the middle of the Royal Forest of Rutland, which stretched from Caldecott and Withcote in the west to Stamford in the east. The Forest would have provided not only sport but venison for the king and his courtiers - today there are many pheasants and only the occasional muntjac! Within the Royal Forest there were hunting parks at, for example, Barnsdale, Oakham, Ridlington and Lyddington (where the Bishop of Lincoln was fortunate to have had a deer leap in the park bank to allow the deer in but not out).

There are also signs of village earthworks in a paddock to the north of the cross roads and of fish ponds below Top Hall.

The most significant houses in the village are Lyndon Hall and Top Hall. Abel and Thomas Barker of Hambleton bought the Lyndon estate in 1662 for £9400. They then pulled down the old Manor House and to the west built the present Lyndon Hall. It took ten years to build and was completed in 1677. Additions made later on the west side were mostly demolished in 1950, suffering from dry rot, but some of the additions made by E Browning of Stamford in 1867 (two years after the major restoration of the church) still remain. It seems that Abel Barker was his own architect - he took advice from the well known architect-surveyor of the time John Sturges (who had connections with Chatsworth House, Belton House and Milton Park) but according to the records only paid him 30 shillings: even in 1672, an unlikely sum for the whole project! The influence of Thorpe Hall, not far away near Peterborough and built 20 years earlier, is apparent and, according to Abel Barker's notes on the architectural books he read in the winter of 1667-68, Palladio may well have been another influence. According to *Victoria County History* it is "an excellent example of the transition between the Jacobean and the more pure classic style of architecture" then coming into fashion.

The field to the west of the Hall, called Home Close (see the 1663 and 1794

maps), provided the income for Barker's Charity, which is mentioned on the plaque in the church.

The construction near Lyndon Pond is not, as many people imagine, an ice house, but a roofed water tank which is fed by the adjacent spring and formerly served the whole village (as mentioned in the records of the Revd T K B Nevinson).

Top Hall, which is of similar design to Lyndon Hall, was built at about the same time by the Barker brothers, Abel and Thomas. It is simpler and plainer than Lyndon Hall. Part of the older seventeenth century house with the gabled roof still stands in the north-west corner.

The estate boasts some interesting trees, including a very fine swamp cypress in the Hall gardens, a semi-evergreen Luscombe oak, and a good collection of other oaks.



Fig. 4. Lyndon Post Office and cottages (Rutland County Museum).

Reputedly the oldest house in Lyndon is the old Post Office. It appears on the 1663 map of Lyndon (which is more pictorial than precise, making definite identification very difficult), along with No 4 Church Road, Periwinkle Cottage (on Shellaker's Close), and a building on the site of Bay Tree. There is of course no certainty that the present buildings are those that appear on the map. The 1794 map is very much clearer. Here we can see Bay Tree (with its outbuildings), Home Farm, No 4 Church Road, Periwinkle Cottage, the Old Rectory by the Church, No 7 Post Office Lane, The Old Post Office, Park Cottage, Rose Cottage

Church, No 7 Post Office Lane, The Old Post Office, Park Cottage, Rose Cottage (smaller now than on the map), and the Rectory, before the south-facing wing was added.

Another interesting house is Beech House, formerly the Blue Boar Inn. This was opened in the 1840s for the workers on the railway. It was later closed by the squire because the employees of the railway became so drunk that they impeded the villagers on their way to church.

The roads in and out of the village have changed over the years. The maps of 1663 and 1794 need to be compared with an up-to-date Ordnance Survey to see some of the changes. It is clear that the road which continued from what is now called Post Office Lane to the south of the Hall and on to Manton has disappeared; likewise the road running south from the Hall to Pilton and Wing no longer exists.

Up to 1940 the roads to Edith Weston and North Luffenham were gated. Between these two roads lay Weston Barn. The remains of the farm buildings, which are still visible from both roads, stand above the little stream. Behind it was the village bakehouse. On the Luffenham road there was a lime kiln, which closed in 1880. In the village itself there appear to have been three wells: one at the cross roads where according to the 1663 map there was a market cross, one opposite No 4 Church Road, and the third beside the east doorway to the churchyard.

The Village Hall was erected in 1922. A paragraph in the *Grantham Journal* runs: "The village has lately been enriched by a most generous gift, a fine Village Hall, built by Mrs Conant in memory of her husband, the late Mr E W Conant, JP". The building was used for the first time when the vicar, the Rev E Vere Hodge, who was leaving the village, gave a farewell party to the villagers.

The population of Lyndon has remained remarkably stable over the last hundred years. In 1891 it was 112, it was 103 in 1921, and fell to its lowest level of 85 in 1991. Recent estimates (1995) put it at 116. Whilst the figures are fairly stable, the nature of the population has changed from being largely agricultural in 1891 to a village mostly composed of newcomers and commuters in 1998.



Fig. 5. St Martin's Church, Lyndon (B & E Nicholls).

St Martin's Church

Lyndon Church stands in a grove of trees at the northern end of the village. The two magnificent Wellingtonias, the Scots pine, the cedar, the other conifers and in the spring the daffodils on the north side of the church, and the fine seventeenth century Hall on the south side make a gracious setting for the medieval village church. The stone arch at the west end of the churchyard leading to the Hall and another at the east end which leads round behind the old Rectory (demolished in 1996) and past the east gates to the Hall indicate that this was and largely still is an estate village. The door in the stone arch at the end of Post Office Lane which gives access to this path to the church was in the past opened only on Sundays to allow parishioners to attend church and locked immediately after the church service.

Lyndon Church is for the most part thirteenth and early fourteenth century: the font (see below) may point to the existence of an earlier church. There is evidence of considerable restoration in 1865, described in more detail below.

The *tower* is built in three stages. From the outside you can see the string courses, the moulded plinth at the base and the battlemented parapet above. It is fourteenth century, with the upper part being rebuilt in the fifteenth century. The thin coat of original mortar on the upper part especially of the south face of the tower should be noted: many churches, particularly those built of small soft stone, were rendered in this way. The original fourteenth century window with Victorian stained glass (1866) depicting the Expulsion from Paradise and the Nativity and the thirteenth century coffin lid inside set in the floor are also interesting. The north door of the tower was rebuilt in 1865.

The *south porch* was restored in 1924 but the south doorway is thirteenth century. There is a scratch dial on the east jamb of the doorway. The broken cross on display in the porch was found when part of a house in the village was demolished. According to one account it is part of the village cross which stood at the cross roads, while another claims that it is the head of a finial cross from above some chancel arch and dates back to about 1130.

The *nave* with its arcades and the *chancel arch* are from the early fourteenth century. The double chamfered arcading and the clerestory were the subject of much restoration in 1865. On the north arcading, an aperture in the eastern pillar indicates the previous existence of a rood loft: see the remaining stairs on the north side of the pillar. Opposite on the corresponding pillar on the south side is a plaque which records Thomas Barker's gift to the poor of Lyndon in 1708. This Thomas Barker died without direct heirs and the Hall then passed to Samuel Barker of South Luffenham, the father of another Thomas Barker, the meteorologist.

There is an interesting variety of *carved heads* - on each pillar of the tower arch, in the spandrels of the centre pillars of the nave and at the springs of the roof arches. Most of these appear original but one or two are probably more recent. The *clerestory windows* are in the style of the fourteenth century architecture of the rest of the church but are part of the 1865 restoration, only the hood moulds being original. The glass itself, according to the architect of the restoration, was probably eighteenth century. The pews were installed in 1865, and the chest by the south door is Jacobean.

The *font* is twelfth century: the square stone bowl with its rudely carved animal, scroll and ornamental features stands on a more recent base. It was found buried in the churchyard in 1865.

The *south aisle* dates from the early thirteenth century church. The empty stone bracket for a statue at the east end below the brass memorial plaque to members of the Conant family is intriguing. The 1914-18 War Memorial is on the south wall at the west end. The *north aisle* was widened in the 1865 restoration. At the east end is an early window, with tracery and mullions removed, and the remains of the staircase to the rood loft. The pointed three-light windows are from the 1865 restoration, built in the fourteenth century architectural style. The glass again is probably eighteenth century.

The *chancel* dates from the fourteenth century. The west window, the arch to the organ chamber and the doorway on the south side are all built in that style but are part of the 1865 restoration. The window in the south wall was inserted in 1893 in the same style as the fourteenth century west window in the tower. The marble *pulpit* dates from 1856: the marble *reredos* erected in 1865 depicts on the north side of the altar the Passover in Egypt (Exodus xii); on the south side Moses with the bronze snake (Numbers xxi.4-9); and on the centre panel the symbols of the four evangelists: the winged book of St Matthew, the winged lion of St Mark, the winged bull of St Luke and the eagle of St John.

The *organ chamber* was added in 1865 and the arch opening into the chancel is from that date. The *organ* is a Henry Willis organ built about 1865.

The nave and aisle *roofs* are copper. The chancel, organ chamber and porch are roofed with Collyweston slate (Collyweston is a village about five miles to the east where the quarries are still open). The four large gargoyles to the nave roof are worth inspecting.

As for the *floor* of the church, because the church stands on clay there has been both movement and dampness. The nave and the aisles were re-floored in 1897 because the oak timbers, taken down from the roof in the 1865 restoration and re-used as floor supports, were then found to be completely rotten and the floors unsafe. The chancel floor has been restored in recent years with Victorian tiles from the nave and the nave covered with synthetic tiles.

Amongst the *memorials* in the churchyard, the eighteenth century headstone to William Whiston (see below) is noteworthy. It has been moved to the west wall of the churchyard at the southern end. The stone to Thomas Barker, the meteorologist (see below), has not been identified but is possibly against the

south wall with those of other members of the Barker family.

The tablet on the east wall of the porch has the following inscription, now almost indecipherable:

Sacred to the memory of John Barsby
who died Dec.1 1810 aged 87 years.
Also his wife who died
May 24 1788 aged 61 years.
He was forty years clerk of this place.
He sung his psalms, he's run his race.
He's closed his book, he's said Amen.
In Christ he hopes to rise again.

Harrison Stamford

The Church has four bells:

Treble: diam. 26 inches. Nunc Martne Cana Vobis Ore Iucundo Remmedg hunte 1597. Now O Martin I sing to you with pleasant voice (Remegius Hunt inherited the manor of Lyndon in 1586 and died in 1618).

Second: diam. 28 inches. Omnia fiant ad gloriam Dei. A.D. 1624. Let all things be done to the glory of God. Cast by Tobie Norris of Stamford.

Third: diam. 30 inches. Samuel Barker Esquire 1716.

Tenor: diam. 34 inches. Sr. Thomas Barker Baronet of Lindon M.P. Clayton Rector 1687.

The treble and second bells were recast by Taylor and Co of Loughborough in 1889.

The parish registers are now deposited at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Amongst them there is a register of baptisms, burials and marriages dating back to 1580. The registers continue to 1997 with some small gaps.

The first known Rector of Lyndon was Magister Stephen de Sandwich, sub deacon, whose patron was the Lord of the Manor, Alan de Lyndon. He was instituted in 1234. By the south door of the church there is a list of the Rectors of Lyndon to the time when Henry VIII carved Peterborough diocese out of the diocese of Lincoln.

Church Restorations

The Church has not always been in good repair. In the seventeenth century, the Archdeacons' Visitations show that the condition of the Church left much to be desired. In 1605 there was no decent pulpit, the church was unpaved "and the rain cometh in most intollerable", there was no "pewter stoope pot for the communion", there was a chapel on the south side of the church which was "very much in decay and annoyeth the chauncell very much and the repair thereof belongeth to Mr. Hunt", the churchyard fence was in decay so that hogs "do root up the churchyard".

In 1619 "the stoope pot for the communion was like an alehouse quart, the register book was not subscribed according to the canons, the aisle northward was wholly down in the roof". In 1640 the chapel on the south side of the church had become utterly ruinous and there was no paten. In 1681 the churchwardens were ordered to set up on the walls the Ten Commandments, the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, and buy a new Erasmus Paraphrase, a Book of Canons, Bishop Jewell (his *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, published in 1562, had become the standard defence of the Anglican Settlement), a Book of Homilies, and a Table of Marriages.

In the nineteenth century the church had apparently fallen into grave disrepair. For this again we have contemporary evidence. In 1893 the Rector of Lyndon wrote to the Architect responsible for the restoration of the church in 1865 (T G Jackson of Buckingham Street, Strand, London) and received a brief account of the work done. The contract had been between Mr Conant and Messrs Halliday and Cave of Greetham. It was a far reaching programme and the essential work seems to have been as follows.

A new vestry and organ chamber were added to the north of the chancel, with an arch into the chancel. Major repairs to the chancel included the rebuilding of the south-east angle of the chancel where it had parted from the side walls; a new top to the chancel walls and a new roof; and a new east window.

Major works were also carried out on the nave. The north-east angle had to be strengthened where it had been cut away. The clerestory walls and nave arcade on both sides were taken down and rebuilt, though the pillar on the south side was not disturbed. The arches were reset, stone for stone: a few new stones probably had to be used. The clerestory windows were similarly reset, stone for stone, but where the jambs and heads were perished and had lost their tracery they were replaced. The roofs of the nave and the aisles were entirely renewed in oak, and in the case of the nave reproduced exactly the original roof. It is not clear whether the lead was completely replaced or simply made good.

Both aisles were given new west windows. The north aisle was enlarged by rebuilding the wall parallel to the nave but further out and given two new windows. The architect originally specified that the side windows of the aisles should have new lintels of oak but it would appear that when it was decided that the north aisle should be widened the present stone window arches were built.

New jambs and head were built to the tower doorway (now only visible from the outside).

Considerable changes were made to the interior. The walls were replastered (in his report of some 30 years later, the architect T G Jackson adds "a thing I would not do nowadays!"), new seats were installed in the nave and the chancel, new tile paving put down throughout, and a new wooden floor inserted under the seats. A new pulpit was installed, a new lectern made and a new altar rail put in place. The specification also includes "warming and chimney", evidence of which can be seen in the organ chamber.

Finally, the windows: T G Jackson writes "New glazing, for which, if I remember, I used glass of the last century of which builders had a great deal unfortunately removed from other churches."



*Fig. 6. Lyndon Church photographed by G M Henton in 1915
(Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland).*

The Dedication - Saint Martin of Tours

Feast Day November 11th

Martin was born in AD 315 in what is now Hungary, at a place called Sabaria. He became a popular saint across western Christendom - loved for his gentleness of life, his care for the poor, his firmness with the rich, and his concern for the building up and unity of the church.

He was brought up in Pavia in Italy and followed his father into the army. As an officer in the Roman army he went to Amiens. It was on the great Roman road which ran between Lyons and Boulogne that, on a bitter winter day, he met a naked beggar. He cut his own cloak in two with his sword and gave half to the beggar. He was later led to recognise that in clothing the beggar he was clothing Christ. Soon after this he was baptised.

In 339 Martin sought his discharge from the army. "I am", he said, "Christ's soldier; I am not allowed to fight." He was accused of cowardice but as he offered to stand unarmed before the enemy he was given his discharge. He lived in Italy for a time, became a recluse, joined Bishop Hilary in Poitiers, and then founded the first monastery in Gaul at nearby Ligugé.

In 370 he was made Bishop of Tours - not without opposition. His biographer Sulpicius Severus writes that some people regarded him as "a contemptible person, unworthy of the episcopate, despicable in countenance, mean in dress, uncouth in his hair". Despite all that he was consecrated bishop and set about visiting his diocese - on foot, on a donkey, or by boat. Many stories are told of his travels: his meetings with a robber, a beggar, a rich man, the emperor and the devil. A number, no doubt, are pure hagiography. But his holiness of life is indisputable.

Soon after being made bishop, he moved out of Tours to a solitary place, about two miles away on the bend of a river and at the foot of the high ground, which soon became another monastery, Marmoutier, where he could live a more meditative life. Throughout his life he showed a genuine concern for every human being, whether a poor serf or the emperor himself. Though he set himself firmly against idolatry and heresy, he was compassionate towards the ignorant and the heretic.

St Martin, one of the first of the non-martyr saints. died near Tours in AD 397. He was held in such honour that the first church to be built in Canterbury after St. Augustine's mission was dedicated to St. Martin - and possibly the most famous church in the country is St. Martin's-in-the-Fields.

William Whiston 1667-1752

William Whiston is buried in Lyndon churchyard on the south side of the church. His headstone has been moved from its original site and stands against the west wall of the churchyard. The lettering is somewhat eroded but it reads:

Here lyeth the Body of
The Revd William Whiston M.A.
He was born December 9 1667
And died August 22 1752
In the 85th year of his age
His writings shew
his unwearied study
and excessive knowledge
in various parts of literature.
His sufferings for conscience sake
prove his sincerity.
After a life spent
in piety towards God
and benevolent charity
towards man
He rests in Hope
through the merits of Christ
of a joyful and blessed Resurrection
to eternal life.

Whiston was a mathematician and theologian. His mathematical research was notable, his theology unorthodox and the cause of his "sufferings for conscience sake". He was dismissed from his chair as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in Cambridge, which he held in succession to Isaac Newton, because of his unorthodox theology. He published a number of religious books including his translation of the works of Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, for which he is best remembered; and the *Life of Samuel Clarke*, a contemporary divine from Norwich and Cambridge who had marked unitarian leanings. In fact it was his own leanings in this direction that led to his downfall. Apparently his theological views had moved, like those of his predecessor Isaac Newton, in the direction of the old fourth century heresy of Arius, who had questioned the divinity of Christ and whose views had been condemned at the Council of Nicea in AD 325. Having espoused some such views, and being less cautious than his predecessor in expressing them, Whiston was expelled from the University in

1710 and left the Church of England in 1747 to join the General Baptists.

His scientific work met with greater appreciation. His lectures on Newton's *Principia* were published and were highly regarded in the eighteenth century. He wrote *A New Theory of the Earth*, published in 1696, in which he attributed the origin of the earth and all historical events to the activity of comets. He spent 40 years trying to solve the problem of longitude. This had become a matter of



Fig. 7. The Revd William Whiston (Sir John Conant/B & E Nicholls).

some importance. Mariners were losing their lives and valuable shipping was being lost because of the inability to calculate accurate locations - in 1707 for example Sir Cloudesly Shovell lost four ships and 2000 men on the Scillies' rocks because the navigator got it wrong. The Board of Longitude was established in 1714 to tackle the problem.

On 22nd August 1752 William Whiston died at Lyndon Hall, which had become his second home since 1715 when his daughter Sarah married Samuel Barker. He was a strong influence on his grandson, Thomas Barker the meteorologist.

Thomas Barker 1722-1809

Thomas Barker was born at Lyndon Hall in 1722, and died on 29th December 1809. He was buried in Lyndon churchyard on 3rd January 1810.

His claim to fame was as a leading meteorologist in the latter part of the eighteenth century. In his own time he made a significant contribution to the data about the weather which were being collected across Europe, and he had a number of papers published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*. His journals contain records of the weather for over 60 years at Lyndon Hall, and today researchers into climatic change are finding invaluable the reliable and comprehensive observations made in the eighteenth century by men like him. A full account of them was published by the Rutland Record Society in *The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire*, edited by John Kington, from which the quotations below are taken.

The observations recorded in his journals are largely to do with weather conditions: he records barometric pressure (probably using a mercury barometer with a vernier scale), temperature (originally with an alcohol thermometer), clouds, wind and rainfall. His attention to the weather is indefatigable and reflects even at an early stage in his life an interest in long-term weather patterns. Take for example his account of the Great Frost in 1739-1740, when he was only seventeen:

The Frost in the winter 1739-40 was remarkable, being both Long, Severe, & Settled, but was made more remarkable by the very backward, dry, & cold season which followed it, & was more destructive than the Frost itself.

The Autumn 1739 was mostly cold, with frequent Rimy mornings. The wind being mostly Northerly all October, but there was no settled frost till November 7, when there came one for 10 days, which was sharp for the time of year. It froze .9 of an inch in a whole day in this frost, & the greatest thickness of the ice was 3.1 inches ...

... at the end of December it grew colder and began to freeze December 25 at night, the wind being ENE ... December 30 in the day time it froze an inch; & in night after 2.5 inches. and December 31 the Thermometer was fallen to [-4 C°], which is far lower than I ever before saw it, though if the Thermometer had been out of doors it would probably have fallen still lower....

Snow began to fall in January and then "it froze most days & every night till February 16 ... February 2 when the Ice was thickest I found it 11.5 In. thick in a pond ... The Effects of this frost were many & destructive...".

Thomas Barker also noted other strange events, for example: "In a wet season, about Christmas 1787, a piece of apparently sound ground on the north

side of a moderate hill, a mile and a half south-west from Ketton in Rutland, sunk down into the earth, leaving a great hollow." Thomas Barker went to inspect it and found "an oval hole, five yards over one way, and four another, and about four yards deep in the middle." He concludes that this was like the swallow-pits on the other side of Ketton, so called because "being hollow underneath, no water will lie in them, but runs through holes into the ground." The surface of the ground then sinks in to the hollow beneath it. This information was communicated on Barker's behalf to the Royal Society by Thomas White FRS.

Another more spectacular phenomenon was recorded in September 1749:

A remarkable Meteor was seen in Rutland, which I suspect to have been of the same kind as Spouts at Sea....

It was a calm, warm and cloudy Day, with some Gleams and Showers; the Barometer low and falling, and the Wind South, and small. The Spout came between 5 and 6 in the evening; at 8 came a Thunder-Shower, and Storms of Wind, which did some Mischief in some places; and then it cleared up with a brisk N.W. Wind.

The earliest Account I have was from Seaton. A great Smoke rose over or near Gretton, in Northamptonshire, with the Likeness of Fire, either one single Flash, as the Miller said, or several bright Arrows darting to the Ground, and repeated for some Time, as others say. Yet some who saw it, did not think there was really any Fire in it, but that the bright Breaks in a black Cloud looked like it. However, the Whirling, Breaks, Roar, and Smoke frightened both Man and Beast. Coming down the Hill, it took up Water from the River Welland, and passing over Seaton Field, carried away several Shocks of Stubble; and crossing Glaiston, and Morcot Lordships, at Pilton Town's End tore off two Branches ... I saw it pass from Pilton over Lyndon Lordship, like a black smoky Cloud, with bright Breaks; an odd whirling Motion, and a roaring Noise, like a distant Wind, or a great Flock of Sheep galloping along on hard Ground ... As it went by a Quarter of a Mile East from me, I saw some Straws fall from it, and a Part, like an inverted Cone of Rain, reached down to the Ground. Some who were milking, said it came all round them like a thick Mist, whirling and parting, and, when that was past, a strong Wind for a very little while, though it was calm both before and after. It then passed off between Edithweston and Hambleton, but how much further I do not know.

The account of this extraordinary event, which would today be recognised as a tornado, was again communicated to the Royal Society by Barker.

Like his grandfather William Whiston, Thomas Barker was also something of an astronomer, his major work being *An Account of the Discoveries concerning Comets, with the Way to find their Orbits, and some Improvements in constructing and calculating their Places*, published in 1757.

Barker had many other interests. His journal is full of observations on the

crops and trees, the pastures and the bird life, when the snowdrops begin to flower, when the cuckoo is heard or the swift arrives, when the asparagus comes up, how his bees have fared.

He was obviously concerned too with agricultural matters: in 1748 he recorded an outbreak of cattle disease in his meteorological journal.

The latter end of last summer the murrein again visited this county, and whilst the fields were open and the weather dry, spread like wildfire carrying destruction with it. Since I believe several thousands of beasts must have perished by it in this small county; but the rest of the winter though it has sometimes continued and sometimes spread yet nothing near so many have fallen, and I think fewer died than in autumn; God grant that the people of the land may turn away the wrath of God by true repentance, and that we may sin no more lest a worse thing come unto us.

And maybe on that note we should record that he wrote, like his grandfather William Whiston, a number of theological books: one on Baptism, another on the Messiah, and a third on the Demoniacs in the Gospels.

Thomas Barker came from a distinguished local family. The Barkers had been in Lyndon from the time of Henry VIII. Baldwin Barker lived at Hambleton: his son Abel Barker bought Hambleton Old Hall in 1634. In 1639 Abel's son, also called Abel, inherited the property. During the Civil War he sided with Cromwell but in 1660 at the Restoration he was pardoned for any

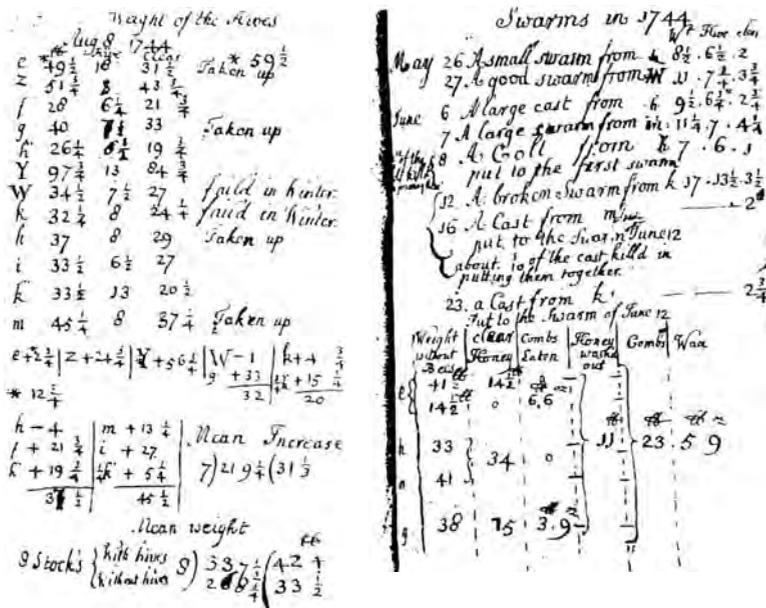


Fig. 8. An extract from Thomas Barker's records of bee-keeping, from the Barker Memoranda Book (Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland).

misdeeds he might have committed: he was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Rutland: he bought with his brother Thomas the Manor at Lyndon: and in 1665 was given a baronetcy.

Between 1671 and 1677 Sir Abel Barker built the Lyndon Hall we now see. Sir Abel died in 1679. His son Thomas then died without an heir and in 1708 the Hall passed to Samuel Barker of South Luffenham, another branch of the family.

Samuel Barker had married Sarah, the daughter of the astronomer, mathematician and priest William Whiston. Thomas Barker, born in 1722, was the son of this marriage. Thomas was friendly with the Rector of Whitwell where he met his future wife Anne White. Anne, the niece of Mary Isaac the wife of the Rector of Whitwell, was the sister of Gilbert White of Selborne, famous for his *Natural History of Selborne* (in which he mentions Lyndon), with whom Thomas Barker and his family were in constant communication. A letter to Gilbert from a friend, John Mulso, of 13th December 1750 before the wedding makes a revealing comment about the bridegroom - and bride - "I heartily wish your Sister much Happiness in her new State: with her cheerful and easy Temper She will be ye best wife in the world to Mr. Barker, and may manage to her own Content and his Advantage that extreme Abstractedness and Speculativeness to which I hear He is naturally prone."

Thomas and Anne had a son Samuel who married Mary Haggitt, and four daughters: the eldest Sarah who married Edward Brown. Thomas Barker died on 29th December 1809, having been a vegetarian from childhood. He was buried in Lyndon churchyard on 3rd January 1810. The inscription on his headstone (it is not now known where this is) is said to have run as follows:

In memory of Thomas Barker Esq.
He concluded a long and most exemplary life
Dec. 1809, Aged 88 years.

He was succeeded by his son Samuel who died in 1835 and in turn was succeeded by his two daughters, Mary who died in 1843 and Ann who died in 1846. The estate was then purchased by their cousin the Revd Edward Brown of Stamford (in accordance with their will). In 1862 he died and the estate passed to Edward Nathaniel Conant, grandson of Sarah, the daughter of John Whiston.

The Revd T K B Nevinson

Glimpses of Life in Lyndon at the end of the nineteenth century

On Saturday 19th January 1889 the Revd T K B Nevinson MA was instituted to the living of Lyndon. He married, had children, took a leading part in the life of the village - and kept a record of village activity, which gives us an interesting insight into the daily life of the community of his time.

Mr Nevinson records the first Parish Meeting to be held in the village, in accordance with the Local Government Act 1894, in the Old Rectory on 4th December 1894 at 6 pm. He was elected chairman. He goes on to record its dynamic discussions! On 22nd March 1902 "Mr Presgrave (one of the Overseers of the Poor) called attention to the prevalence of moles in the Lordship, but nothing definite was done." At the Vestry Meeting on 30th March 1889 Mr J Stanton had been appointed Mole-catcher: the salary paid out of a voluntary Penny Rate was 50 shillings. But by April 1891 Mr Stanton had left the village and the office of Mole-catcher was abolished.

On 25th November 1908 "A meeting (public) was held in the Laundry to discuss the question of asphaltting the paths in the village. Of the twelve men present, ten voted in favour of asphalt, two against... N.B. The Highway Committee of the R[ural] D[istrict] Council in June 1909 refused to sanction the proposal."

But some things did happen in the village:

On twelfth November 1891, there was started a Reading-room for the men and boys of Lyndon in the room over the Sunday School at the old Rectory. The Room will be open during the winter months on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 6 to 9 pm. No betting or gambling, and no refreshments will be allowed. There were twelve present on the opening night.

In the Autumn of 1900 a road was made in front of the five cottages adjoining the Village Green, and carried round to join the Wing Road, the object being to keep carts off the Green.

And then the postal arrangements were improved. "Previous to Dec. 1900 there was only one delivery (8.25 am) and one collection (4.45 pm). In Nov 1900 a Petition to the Postmaster General was drawn up by the Rector, and signed by the principal inhabitants of Lyndon, Manton, and Wing...". The result was that there were two deliveries and two collections each day. Today this has averaged out to two collections and one delivery!

The spirit of Thomas Barker lived on. On 17th December 1896 Mr Nevinson

records: "A slight earthquake shock was felt at Lyndon between 5.30 and 6.00 pm: no damage was done." Later, on Monday 28th May 1900: "An eclipse of the sun took place from 2.47 to 4.57 pm, total in Spain, N Africa etc. Here more than 3/5 of the sun was obscured ... The Rector and his Son carried pieces of smoked glass round the village."

And then to the supernatural: "In the possession of Mr Conant is (1904) a document which sets forth that Mr Sam Barker in 1722 let Lyndon Hall on lease to Mr Thos Trollope. It provides among other things that "a young holly hedge against Hand's Lane is to be preserved and delivered up in as good order as found upon entrance. NB Hand's Lane, which used to be the direct road to Manton and ran along the south side of the holly hedge, until it was stopped by Mr E N Conant, had the reputation of being haunted, *teste* Mrs. Wm Fox, née Sidney, +1901."

Among the profusion of church activity, the Rector records the founding of a branch of the Mother's Union on 5th December 1900. "Nine members were admitted after Evensong at 3 pm, being a Wednesday in Advent." On Sunday 1st May 1904 "A Hymn Board, the gift of Mrs. Jane Jackson Housekeeper at Lyndon Hall, was used for the first time."

And then of course there were the people. Amongst them was Thomas Cliffe who succeeded Richard Barsby, whose memorial tablet is on the east wall of the south porch (see above), as Parish Clerk, presumably in 1872. He lived in the first cottage on the right hand side, approaching Lyndon from Wing. "It is reputed that when water was laid on from the old Hall reservoir to the wells in the village (see below), he refused to use it, and continued to fetch his own water from a spring down in the field near the river."

On 14th February 1893 he wrote to the Rector:

Rev Sir,

I now address you on a subject which may not to you be pleasing but at the same time I feel it my duty to do so; tomorrow being the first day of Lent you will undoubtedly pronounce the curse against sinners of whom I am chief. Therefore I cannot concienially pronounce the Amen any more I will light the fire as usual and chime the Bells and stop at the service but make no response to those horrid sentences in all other matters your servant I am

Thos Cliffe.

Mr Cliffe resigned the clerkship owing to lameness on 18th July 1897. The Rector decided not to appoint another clerk, and on 31st October 1905 Thomas Cliffe died at the age of 80.

There is a cutting from the *Grantham Journal* of 18th April 1903 recording the welcome given to Mr E W P Conant and his family, Mr Conant having succeeded to the estate of the late E N Conant, Esq. his father. "At the entrance-lodge gates, a very pretty arch was erected. At the top, upon a background of red cloth, was the word "Welcome", cut out of white material. Suspended from the centre was a good imitation of a horseshoe, made of primroses and forget-

me-nots. Over the entrance-hall, also upon a background of red cloth, and the letters in white, were the words "Health and Happiness": while at each corner two Union Jacks were floating in the breeze. Mr and Mrs Conant arrived at Manton Station by the 5.35 train on Wednesday evening, and the inhabitants, his tenants, turned out *en masse* to give them a hearty reception. Upon their arrival, the horse was taken out of the shafts, ropes were quickly attached, and the carriage was drawn up to the front door, where the Rector of the parish, the Rev T K B Nevinson, in a few well-chosen words, welcomed Mr and Mrs Conant and family. Mr Conant, in reply, thanked all for their enthusiastic greeting, and kindly invited those who had drawn the carriage to partake of refreshments, the health of Mr and Mrs Conant being duly toasted. Mr Nevinson called for three cheers, which were vociferously given. The bells were rung upon their arrival and during the evening. Mr and Mrs Nevinson, Messrs B Wright, head gardener, and assistants, helped with the decorations."

On the north wall of the north aisle of the Church there is a plaque which commemorates a death in South Africa. The account here is from the *Grantham Journal* of 5th July 1902.

Sad news reached [Lyndon] on June 24th, by telegram from the War Office to Mr and Mrs B Wright, stating that their eldest son, Frederick Lewis [of the South African Constabulary] had been thrown from his horse in South Africa, causing concussion of the brain, from which he died. He was well-known and respected, gaining many friends wherever he went, and his death will be felt and deplored. Great sympathy is expressed for the bereaved parents and his brother, in their trouble.

Mr Ben Wright, the father, was the head gardener on the estate and lived in Gardener's Cottage.

It is interesting to learn of the planting of some of the trees which we now enjoy in Lyndon Parish.

In the Autumn of 1898 Mr Ernest W P Conant had 125 oak trees planted by the roadsides as follows:-

<i>Manton road</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Wing ditto</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>E Weston ditto</i>	<i>15</i>

The first on the left hand side of Wing road as you leave the village was planted by Mr E W P Conant; the first on the right hand side, below the Rectory was planted by the Rector (T K B Nevinson), the second by the Rector's wife (E M Nevinson), the third by his son (H K B Nevinson). Besides these, 76 lime trees were planted on the Luffenham road beyond the Lyndon parish boundary."

The water supply to Lyndon has an interesting history.

A map in the possession of Ed N Conant Esq marks the position of the Spring which

supplied, and still supplies, the village. The supply used to be conveyed to the village in a stone drain, open most of the way. The Revd Edwd Brown, lord of the manor, who died in Sept 1862, several years before his death made one of the two reservoirs, and substituted iron pipes for the stone drain. Edwd N Conant Esq, who succeeded his uncle Mr Brown, made another reservoir.

The results of the Census are also noted:

April 1891. According to the Official Return the population of Lyndon amounted to 112.

March 1901. The population of Lyndon amounted to 114. N.B. Almost immediately afterwards two families left the village.

Finally there is the impending rectorial change reported by the *Grantham Journal* of 12th June 1909:

The Rev Thomas Kaye Bonny Nevinson, MA, of St John's College, Cambridge (BA 1874) has just accepted the living of Medbourne-cum-Holt, near Market Harborough, offered him by St John's College, Cambridge, and which was vacant through the resignation of the Rev Chas Fryer, Eastburn, who had been Rector there since 1870. The annual value, as given in the Diocesan Calendar, is 487 pounds, with thirty one acres of glebe; the population of Medbourne at the last census was 427 and Holt 53. The Rev T K B Nevinson was instituted Rector of Lyndon, near Oakham, in 1889, twenty years ago, and the parishioners, and very many others who know and respect him greatly, will learn of his impending removal with unfeigned regret. The living of Lyndon is of the annual value of 130 pounds, with 14 acres of glebe, and the patron is Mr E W P Conant, of Lyndon Hall.



Fig. 9. Lyndon Church in a sketch of about 1793 (Rutland County Museum).

Harry Betts remembers ...

As a postscript to the records of the Revd T K B Nevinson, Mr Harry Betts, who was baptised by Mr Nevinson in 1906 and lived in the village until he died in 1997 at the age of 90, had clear recollections of the estate before the First World War. His father had come to Lyndon as coachman in 1903. He himself later became chauffeur, spending the last 40 years of his life in the gardener's cottage.

He remembered that a few years before the war there was a staff of ten at the Hall. Each Sunday morning they would go to church, the women wearing black bonnets tied under the chin, and would sit in the pews in the south aisle.

On the estate there was a cowman and shepherd who lived in a cottage in Post Office Lane. He was responsible for the dairy and for supplying butter to the Hall. There were also a coachman and groom, and three gardeners. The groom and the two single gardeners lived in the room over the apple store. This three storey building was just inside the entrance to the Old Rectory (now demolished). Under the apple store was the stable for the gardener's horse. The groom and the two single gardeners ate in the Bothy where a woman would come and cook for them.

He remembers that the estate bricklayer and mason came from Hambleton on a tricycle and had his workshop in the end part of the head gardener's cottage. The estate carpenter lived in the Lodge, and his housekeeper was responsible for opening the Hall gates for anyone calling at the Hall.



Fig. 10. The gardener's cottage (A R Traylen).

Lyndon Today

Rutland Water has changed the face of the local countryside. The road which brought Abel and Thomas Barker to Lyndon in the 1670s is now under water. It swallowed up acres of the Lyndon estate and left Hambleton Old Hall, part of the estate, stranded on the farther side. Along its shores the Lyndon Nature Reserve and Visitor Centre and the Eggleton Bird Watching Centre attract enthusiasts all the year round. In a contemporary way they continue the tradition of those eminent observers of the natural world Thomas Barker and his brother-in-law Gilbert White, a frequent visitor to Lyndon.

Rutland Water also brings tourists - walking, cycling, driving - to explore the byways of Rutland. Their approach to Lyndon will be along an avenue of oak or ash or lime, whose planting was recorded by the Revd T K B Nevinson. More recently, tree planting has been continued with the creation of pockets of mixed woodland around the estate. They provide a haven for a variety of wildlife from owls and woodpeckers to badgers, foxes and the timid muntjac, all of which can occasionally be seen in the vicinity.

Lyndon remains largely an estate village as it has been for centuries. The first Conant, Edward Nathaniel, succeeded to the estate in 1862 but the family can trace its ancestry back to Abel Barker. The estate is still managed and the land farmed by the Conant family. That the village has retained much of its ancient character and rural charm, and has escaped the development that has changed so many Rutland villages, is due to their influence.

At the heart of the village is the church and churchyard. They tell us something of the history of the place, of the people who have lived and died here, and of the faith of our forebears. The church has undergone many restorations: its appearance has changed: but it continues to this day to be a place of prayer, a place to mourn and a place to celebrate, as it has been throughout its 700 year history.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Bryan Waites for his encouragement and ready help, and for providing a wealth of information as well as writing the preface; to Tim Clough for his guidance and patient editing, to Sir John Conant and Edward Conant for useful details about family and village, and to John Kington, whose edition of *The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire* proved invaluable. For permission to use various photographs I am grateful to Sir John Conant and Brian & Elizabeth Nicholls, A R Traylen, Rutland County Museum, and the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

Charles Mayhew

Further Reading

Further information about Lyndon, its people, and its buildings may be found in the following publications:

Kington, J, *The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire* (Oakham 1988)

Kington, J, *The Weather of the 1780s over Europe* (Cambridge 1988)

Kington, J A & B D, Thomas Barker of Lyndon Hall, Rutland, and his weather observations, *Rutland Record* 2 (1981) 58-67

Rutland Local History Society, *The Villages of Rutland* pt 2 (Stamford, nd)

Who was Who in Rutland, *Rutland Record* 8 (1988)

Sharpling, P, *Stained Glass in Rutland Churches* (Oakham 1997)

Victoria County History, *Rutland II* (1935)

Waites, B, A newly-discovered letter from Thomas Barker, *Rutland Record* 2 (1981) 68-9

The Revd T K B Nevinson's notebooks and the Lyndon parish registers are now deposited in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

Charles Mayhew retired to Lyndon in 1994. He is well acquainted with the area, having formerly been Vicar of Oakham with Hambleton and Eggleton and Braunston with Brooke. Before moving to Rutland he was a country parish priest in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. He is a Canon Emeritus of Peterborough Cathedral.

The Rutland Local History & Record Society exists to promote all aspects of the history of the ancient county of Rutland, and publishes an annual journal, the *Rutland Record*, as well as the *Rutland Record Series* of research reports and *Occasional Papers*, of which this is the fifth. New members are welcome, and for details of membership and of publications currently available enquiries should be made of the Society at the Rutland County Museum, Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HW.

