

BARKWAY LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

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The Burrs of Barkway

In the early 1800s Samuel Burr was baking bread in Widford. One of his sons, William Day Burr came to Barkway, and started a bakery business here. Throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries the Burrs were a family of influence in the village, establishing a successful bakery, and also a branch of the family trading in meat. Many of the Burrs were conspicuous in social service as well as in sport.

Number 77 High Street at the entry to Burrs Lane, was the bakery. The large garden and orchard is now given over to housing.

William ran the bakery from around the 1840s up to his retirement, when he lived at the Retreat. He eventually moved to Hare Street where another branch of the family had business connections and died there in 1884.

William's son Charles carried on with running the bakery business. The main house contained a shop, with the baking oven in a single storey building to the side. Charles sang in the Barkway church choir for over 70 years, almost up to the time of his death at the age of 82.

Charles's elder brother George came to Barkway and was initially licensee at the Cross Keys. He then took over the Welsh Harp alehouse in Newsells. Here he not only supplied beer plus a variety of groceries, but also meat. He later on bought the old Plough pub in the High Street at number 42 and ran his butchery business from here with the help of his son William. William's son George carried on here up until the 1960s.

At the bakery Charles was ably assisted by his son Walter. Walter's daughter Mary recalls that when he came back from the First World War, her father who had served in the light lancers, brought back a horse which he used on the bread round. She also recalled Mr Pledger, the nearby butcher bringing over trays of faggots to go in the oven, as well as people's turkeys at Christmas. She remembered Jack Whyman in the horse drawn cart, with lettering W P Burr on the side delivering bread. Travellers to Newmarket races called in for bread on their way.

The bakery finally shut its doors in 1965 with the death of Walter, and the property sold, and thus ended one long chapter of Barkway history.