

WHOSE PEW?

by

Peggy McKerracher.

In 1706 Edward Barton of Bishops Waltham married Elizabeth Perin daughter of Christopher Perin of Old Alresford, and niece of Dr. Henry Perin, founder of the school. The couple came to Alresford to reside at the 'Lindens', East Street.

Some years after this event, Edward Barton quarrelled with the Churchwardens and Bailiff and Burgesses over his seat in the Parish Church. It appears that although he had lived in the parish for some years no seat had been allocated to him until 1716 when. Anthony Whitcomb, churchwarden; placed him in one of the seats allocated to the Bailiff and Burgesses (Whitcomb lived next door to Barton), This was a serious matter to those concerned and had to be settled in Court, so in February 1717 Barton presented articles against the Bailiff and Burgesses, arguing that since, the original Charter had been lost, their appointment was illegal and as a consequence they ought not to be granted a faculty for the said seats. Furthermore, he paid more rates than they did!

He accused Thomas Scriven the Bailiff for that. year (1717) of fixing a lock on the door of the pew without legal authority. Barton did not care for Scriven at all, and said that "when the Rev. Needharn, Rector, goes up into the pulpit to preach said Scriven in a rude and irreverent manner, walks out of the Church to the great offence and disturbment of the Congregation.

The behaviour of William Hudson one of the Bailiffs was even worse, "He owned up that he had never been christened, had refused to be baptised and would always or very often sit down in the Church, reading some book at such times as the congregation by direction of the rubrick does kneel and stand up, and used to wear his hat in church there",

Edward Barton considered himself "superior to them or the. greatest part of them, in quality and estate, and a constant frequenter of the services and sacraments of the church. The Bishop agreed that Barton should have the upper seat in the middle Isle (sic) as he had it before his removal to the Burgesses seats, and his Lordship hoped "all the disputes about: seats would be resolved".. Not likely! After the building of a Great Gallery at the West end of the Church, Barton applied for a faculty to erect a pew in the Gallery at his own expense, for the exclusive use of himself and his family. At a Vestry held in June 1717, almost everyone present, opposed the granting of a faculty to Edward Barton and again there were Court proceedings in Winchester,

Finally, the disputes were resolved and in 1724 he was granted a faculty to erect a pew in the Great Gallery of the Church for his own use and for the use of future owners of the residence in East Street where he was then living . This faculty, written on parchment is still in existence and when the galleries were taken down late last century, a new seat was allocated to the occupier of this house.

Edward Barton was an Attorney, a member of the professional class and. not in 'TRADE', which probably accounted for his good opinion of himself.

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