

## **Barton Hall**

### Early History

The first significant building on this site was probably a small farmhouse occupied by Thomas Newton, son of Daniel Newton of Horning. Thomas died in 1658 and the house passed to his eldest son Daniel, who in turn gave all his Lands and Tenements in Barton Turf to his eldest son, also named Daniel. In 1685 Daniel married Elizabeth, daughter of Henry Negas of Hoveton, however, by 1692 he was in some considerable financial difficulty and he was forced to take out a mortgage and sell part of his estate. The principal residence known as the Newton House was sold to Col. Samuel Venner. In the sale agreement dated 1695 the property was described as a farmhouse with barns, malthouse, stables and outhouses, together with orchard and gardens, arable, meadow and pasture land; a total of 130 acres.

### Venner

In 1700 Venner pulled down most of Newton's house and built a large West wing consisting of a grand set of principal rooms that he furnished 'very handsomely according to the fashion of the day'. A small part of the old house was left standing behind the new building to serve as kitchen and offices. It is possible that Venner intended to replace the domestic quarters at a later date, but he did not live to see his plans carried out; he died in 1712 and is buried in Barton Church. His widow Elizabeth inherited the property and after her death in 1723 the house passed to their son who sold it to the Revd Stephen Norris in 1728. Norris already owned some land in Barton, part of the White House estate that he purchased from the Baldero family in 1726.

### Norris

Revd Stephen Norris greatly improved his Barton residence by adding an attractive garden, described by his son Anthony as 'very handsome gardens consisting of upwards of 7 acres of Grounds'. Near the house there was a walled kitchen garden and a large rectangular fishpond, a long brick wall beside the public road gave some privacy to the garden, and a new carriage drive approached the house from the South-West. In the parkland Norris planted a wide avenue of trees pointing in the direction of the parish church. In 1733 the Revd Norris gave his Barton estate to his eldest son Stephen who had recently married, but within a year his son died. An interesting Probate Inventory of 1734 lists all his possessions, including every item of household furniture, kitchen equipment and garden tool. The contents of the house are recorded room by room, from the Great Parlour and the Bed Chamber to the Kitchen, Cellar and Brew-house.

After the death of Stephen Norris his brother Anthony and his family shared the house with Stephen's widow Abigail, who died in 1742. Anthony married Sarah Custance from Weston Longville in 1737 and a year later their son John was born at Barton Turf. In 1742 Anthony Norris started work on a number of major improvements to the house, now known as Barton Hall. He began by 'altering and entirely refitting every room' in the house; the old kitchen that was part of the original Newton House was pulled down and rebuilt. A new stables and coach-house were added in a courtyard on the North side of the house and the garden was enlarged to over 8 acres. Anthony and Sarah's only child John Norris trained as a lawyer like his father, but tragically he died of consumption in 1762 aged 24 years. However, there were two other children who grew up at Barton Hall. Susannah and Sarah Custance, the young nieces of Sarah Norris, were given a home by their Aunt after the death of both their parents. Susannah was aged 20 in 1772 when she was married in Barton Church to Thomas Durrant from Scottow Hall. When Anthony Norris died in 1785 Barton Hall was inherited by his widow Sarah, but she died the following year and it was Susannah Durrant who became the next owner of the property.

### Durrant

Lady Susannah Durrant and her husband Sir Thomas, who was created a baronet in 1783, lived at the nearby village of Scottow and therefore had no reason to occupy Barton Hall themselves. The first people to rent the Hall in September 1787 were friends of the Durrants, George Matcham and his wife Catherine Nelson the sister of Horatio. The Matchams had been married for a little over six months and were no doubt delighted to take up residence at Barton Hall, not least because the house was 'completely furnished'. However, after three very happy years at Barton the Matchams decided that it was time to move on. They spent the summer of 1790 touring the country looking for a suitable property to purchase before finally agreeing to buy some land at Ringwood in Hampshire where they built a new house. For the next 40 years until Lady Durrant sold Barton Hall the house was occupied by a number of tenant farmers. During this time the gardens suffered from much neglect. In 1815 Lady Durrant's sister Sarah Custance, who had grown up in the house and remembered the gardens in all their pristine beauty, wrote in a letter ' . . I am convinced it would nearly break my heart to again see it in this disfigured state – that style of Garden and Pleasure Ground could not be improved'. Sarah hoped that her nephew William Durrant might like to purchase Barton Hall. He was a sensible young man and she thought he had enough taste to restore the place to its former beauty and elegance, but unfortunately Lady Durrant had no intention of parting with the property.

### Preston

From 1830 to 1918 Barton Hall was owned by the Preston family. Lady Jane Preston, widow of Sir Thomas Preston of Beeston, bought the Hall and the surrounding farmland at a public auction in June 1830, and when she died in 1846 her son inherited the estate. Sir Jacob Henry Preston was the owner from 1846 to 1891, and then his son Sir Henry Jacob Preston from 1891 to 1897, followed by his son Sir Jacob Preston from 1897 to 1918. When Sir Jacob died in 1918 the Hall was sold by his brother Sir Edward Hulton Preston. A number of tenant farmers occupied the Hall in the 1830's, and in 1843 the house was totally refurbished, the South front was remodelled and the house much enlarged. It then became the residence of Sir Jacob Henry Preston's five unmarried sisters. In 1901 the last of the Misses Preston sisters, Louisa then aged 87, was living at the Hall.

### After 1918

At an auction held in Norwich in July 1918 John Wood purchased Barton Hall together with over 160 acres of Barton Broad. He owned the estate until 1935 when again it was offered for sale at a public auction, but on this occasion bidding for the whole estate failed to reach the reserve price and so it was divided into a number of individual lots. There were no bids for lot 1 'Barton Hall' or for lot 2 'Barton Broad' and these two lots were withdrawn. After the auction the Hall was bought for £5,000 by Michael Trubshawe; Lewis Storey from Horning paid £750 for part of Barton Broad; and Hall Farm, which had been sold by the Prestons in 1918, was bought by Sir Edward Hulton Preston for £4,200. Mr Trubshawe spent more money than he had anticipated repairing Barton Hall, installing electricity and central heating, and in 1939 he decided to sell the property. However, at an asking price of £10,000 he was unable to find a buyer. During the war the military rented the Hall from Michael Trubshawe and for a while the Royal Engineers were stationed there, but it was mainly used as an Italian prison of war camp. In 1943 Major David Peel, father of the present owner purchased Barton Hall.

### Land belonging to Barton Hall

The amount of land attached to Barton Hall varied considerably with the different owners of the house. While some parcels of land were sold, at others times neighbouring land was acquired and added to the estate. A study of old maps and sale catalogues will help to establish precisely the ownership of land in this part of the parish.

## The Owners of Barton Hall

Thomas Newton (d.1658) yeoman of Barton Turf, son of Daniel Newton of Horning

Daniel Newton (d.1684) eldest son of Thomas Newton

Daniel Newton (b.1663) married Elizabeth Negas in 1685

In 1700 Samuel Venner completed the purchase of the estate and 'Newton quitted the premises'.

- 1700** Col. Samuel Venner (1650-1712) He is buried in Barton Church  
Married Elizabeth Gardiner (1673-1723) who is also buried at Barton  
'.. lived at Barton Turf in a house on the site of the Newton's house (afterwards the Norris House)..'
- 1728** Rev. Stephen Norris (1678-1749) died aged 71, buried in Barton Church  
Married Bridgit Graile (1680-1743) also buried in Barton Church  
'In 1726-1728 he bought the estates of the Balderos and Venners at Barton, and lived in the later, which he greatly improved'  
His eldest son, Stephen, died in 1734
- 1736** Anthony Norris (1711-1786) buried in Barton church  
Antiquary and lawyer, was born in the parish of St George Tombland, Norwich, served as Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk, called to the bar 29<sup>th</sup> November 1735.  
Married 18<sup>th</sup> May 1737 Sarah the daughter of John Custance  
Their only child, John, was born in 1738, and died of consumption in 1762, aged 24
- 1786** Sarah Norris (1717-1787) widow of Anthony Norris
- 1787** Susannah Durrant [Lady Durrant] (1752-1833) orphan niece of Sarah Norris.  
The daughter of Hambleton Custance (1715-1757) High Sheriff of Norwich in 1753 and Susannah Press who died in 1761. She married Thomas Durrant (c1722-1790) of Scottow at Barton Church on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1772.  
Lady Durrant and her sister Sarah Custance erected a monument in Barton Church to the memory of their Aunt Sarah Norris. The brother of Lady Durrant, John Custance (1749-1822) from Weston Longeville is mentioned in James Woodforde's 'Diary of a Country Parson'.  
George Matcham (1753-1833) and his wife Catherine Nelson (1767-1842) sister of Horatio lived at Barton Hall from September 1787 to March 1791.  
George Matcham retired from the Bombay Civil Service in 1785 and returned to England. He lived at Enfield near Bath where he met Kitty Nelson. They were married 26<sup>th</sup> February 1787 at Burnham Thorpe.
- 1830** Lady Jane Preston (d.1846) second wife of Sir Thomas Preston (1767-1823) of Beeston
- 1846** Sir Jacob Henry Preston (1812-1891) who married Amelia Prescott on 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1846  
Barton Hall was occupied by Sir Jacob Henry Preston's five unmarried sisters.
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|-----------------|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Census returns: | Jane Mary Preston (b.1800) | 1861 |      |      |      |
|                 | Anne Preston (b.1807)      | 1861 |      |      |      |
|                 | Sophia Preston (b.1809)    | 1861 | 1871 | 1891 |      |
|                 | Louisa Preston (b.1814)    |      | 1871 | 1891 | 1901 |
|                 | Ellen Preston (b.1815)     | 1861 | 1871 | 1891 |      |

- 1891** Sir Henry Jacob Preston (1851-1897)
- 1897** Sir Jacob Preston (1887-1918)  
After Sir Jacob died his brother Sir Edward Hulton Preston sold Barton Hall.
- 1918** John M. Wood  
The sale of Barton Hall in July 1918 included part of Barton Broad and some outlying portions of the Beeston Estate. In the sale catalogue (lot 1) was Barton Hall, Grounds, Park, five Cottages and 58 acres, (lot 2) The Hall Farm and 202 acres, and (lot 3) 162 acres of Barton Broad. A further five Cottages, two Farms (Home Farm and Point Farm), the Blacksmith's Shop, and the School House were also offered for sale.
- 1935** Michael Trubshawe bought Barton Hall for £5,000 from John Wood's widow. At the auction in October 1935 Barton Hall (lot 1) and Barton Broad (lot 3) were offered for sale together but there were no bids and these two lots were withdrawn. After the sale the Hall was bought by Mr Trubshawe. Mr Lewis Storey of Horning paid £750 for part of the Broad. He also paid £150 for Cox's Boatyard, including the Black Shed on the Parish Staithe, and £550 for the Paddock adjacent to the boatyard. Mr Storey said that he had bought the land and part of the broad to stop it from falling into the hands of any 'undesirable persons' such as speculative builders.  
Sir Edward Preston paid £4,200 for Hall Farm which the Prestons had sold in 1918.
- 1943** David Peel The Hall is now the home of Jonathan Peel and family

References:

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 Barton Turf Church, Norris Family monument  
 Preston Family of Beeston St Lawrence genealogy  
 Directories for Barton Turf, 1836-1912  
 Deeds of Barton Hall 1798-1913, Norfolk Record Office, MC 337/40-44 799X3  
 Barton Hall estate map 1830, NRO, MC 337/267 710X3  
 Barton Hall sale catalogues: 1830,1918 & 1935, Norfolk Record Office  
 Stephen Norris, 1734, Probate Inventory, NRO, DN/INV 79D/16  
 Letter from Sarah Custance to William Gunn, NRO, WGN 1/6/49 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1815