

## APPENDIX 4. BARTON-UPON-HUMBER PARISH MAGAZINE, 1890–1944

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Barton is unusual amongst English parish churches in having had a monthly magazine which was published on a continuous and regular basis for more than half a century, from 1890 to 1944.

### Publication

The magazine was started by the Rev'd (Dr) Charles Moor, who became vicar of Barton in November 1889. He wished to have 'some means, other than the pulpit or the platform, for addressing the people' of Barton; he stated that the magazine would contain 'in addition to parish news, notes on the history, antiquities and curiosities of Barton, such as will perhaps have some attraction for those many persons who love this ancient town.' (i.1890). Over next half-century, a huge volume of such material was published.

The first issue appeared in January 1890, under the title *The Barton-on-Humber Banner of Faith*. In 1893 the format was enlarged and the title was changed to *The Barton Church Magazine*. Production continued under the next vicar, the Rev'd Herbert North-Cox (1894–1910). When the Rev'd (later Canon) W.E. Varah became vicar, in January 1911, various changes ensued. First, the publication was renamed, *The Barton Parish Magazine*, and it was renamed again in 1936, this time as *The Barton-on-Humber Magazine*. As the shift of emphasis in the wording implies, this was no longer just a parish church magazine, but became a vehicle for the expression of the vicar's personal views on a wide range of matters, both secular and ecclesiastical, local and national, and occasionally international. Shortly before his death, Varah resigned the living in November 1944, and the final issue of the magazine appeared in December. In all, 660 consecutive monthly issues were published, over 55 years, itself a remarkable achievement, especially since production was maintained throughout the years of both the First and the Second World Wars.

Early issues were not numbered or fully dated: this process began only in January 1927, with No. 445: the most useful form of citation for a reference is by month and year (*e.g.* i.1927; xii.1944). At least three sets of magazines were bound in red cloth, with gold blocking on the spine. Only one set (that belonging to Canon Varah) remains complete, and is in private possession. A second set has been deposited with Lincolnshire Archives: it lacks the first volume, which was supplied in photocopy form.<sup>1</sup> The third set, which may or may not have been complete, has been dispersed.

The bound volumes in Lincolnshire Archives comprise the following:

| Volume | Dates     | Issue numbers | Notes   |
|--------|-----------|---------------|---|
| I      | 1890–92   | [1–36]        | Photocopy. Early issues were not individually numbered. |
| II     | 1893–98   | [37–108]      |   |
| III    | 1899–1904 | [109–180]     |   |

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1. LA: Barton Par. 22/1/1–9.

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|------|---------|-----------|--|
| IV   | 1905–14 | [181–300] | Lacks issue for March 1911                       |
| V    | 1915–24 | [301–420] |  |
| VI   | 1925–30 | [421]–492 | Individual numbering only started with issue 445 |
| VII  | 1931–35 | 493–552   |  |
| VIII | 1936–41 | 553–624   |  |
| IX   | 1942–44 | 625–650   | Final issue                                      |

In 1987, a thorough trawl of the magazines was undertaken by the present writer and a portfolio compiled containing photocopies of all entries relating to the fabric, furnishings and fittings of St Peter's, St Mary's and St Chad's churches, together with a collation of general historical and topographical notes. This portfolio is held in the St Peter's archive.

### **Contents of the Magazine**

The magazine not only contained notices of parochial events, but was also the vehicle for publishing a great variety of notes of a historical and architectural nature. It is the principal, or only, source of information on many small changes which occurred to the church buildings and their furnishings.

Vestry and Parochial Church Council meetings were regularly reported, but they impart little information except the names of elected officers and committees. A great volume of financial detail is preserved in the pages of the magazine, including detailed lists of donations to various projects, and notes on expenditure. Between 1889 and 1941 the churchwardens' annual accounts were published, although the content and detail given are both erratic and variable. Sometimes offertories alone were reported, and sometimes expenses were listed. Only in 1891 were the expenses for St Peter's and St Mary's separately identified, and it was not until 1900 that properly balanced accounts were presented. Mysteriously, there were no published accounts for 1906, and only partial accounts for 1907 and 1908 ('for want of space'). A serious financial difficulty clearly arose, which was never explained in the magazine: instead, an appeal was made in 1907 to cover the deficit. There is no evidence of major works taking place around this period which might have accounted for an excess of income over expenditure, and this, coupled with complete silence on the part of the church officers, points to the likelihood that some form of financial impropriety occurred and was covered up. Thereafter, accounts were regularly presented until 1941, after which no more were published.

The magazine is also a fruitful quarry for social history, reflecting the personal interests and attitudes of the clergy to their parishioners, church buildings and surroundings in general. During his incumbency, North-Cox was exercised by the necessity of raising money for restoration and beautification of the churches. The magazine was thus filled with requests for donations to various funds and gifts of objects. In his New Year's letter in 1898, he exhorted his parishioners to give more:

'You will perhaps bear with me when I say that the ordinary Sunday offertories for Church expenses are not what they ought to be. The offertories for special purposes are nearly always good, but the amount contributed week by week for the maintenance of the services of the Church is neither adequate nor creditable. ... the ordinary Sunday offertory ... ought to be £5 whereas it does not often amount to even £4. A few people give well, and I know that many who are quite poor give liberally according to their means, but, alas, there must be large numbers of persons worshipping in our Churches who either give as little as the English coinage will allow, or nothing at all.' (i.1898).

Varah was a man who knew his mind and was not slow to speak it. He had a never-ending list of 'wants' and 'needs' for the churches, and the magazine became a vehicle for begging, exhorting and cajoling parishioners to fulfil his requirements. As the years went by, Varah injected ever more personal and abrasive comment into the magazine, admonishing parishioners, ingratiating the middle classes, patronizing the working class, ridiculing civic authorities, and ensuring that his own achievements were never overlooked. Remarks of an offensive, or cringingly self-congratulatory, nature abounded.

### **Antiquarian Contributions**

Dr Moor was a serious historian and scholar, who researched and published widely. He was described as 'a highly competent student of archaeology and architecture as well as an active parish priest' (xi.1944). His first series of articles concerned St Mary's church (iv-x.1890), and were later republished as a booklet (Moor 1892). The second series concerned St Peter's (iv, x.1891), and that was later edited and republished (Ball 1909). Moor researched the history of the living and contributed frequent notes to the magazine. He compiled an annotated list of the many Barton charities (ii-vii.1892) and published the first list of the vicars of Barton (vii-xi.1893), followed by one of the chantry priests (vi-viii.1894).

Canon Varah was also a dedicated amateur historian, but not in Moor's league: his work was largely derivative. Like many others of his era, he paid insufficient attention to scholarly rigour, and was more concerned to tell a complete and seemingly authoritative story than to present substantive material. Consequently, it is difficult to separate fact from fiction and folklore in the voluminous notes that he penned for the magazine. Cumulatively, his contribution was huge, and he published much interesting material, including transcripts (or usually excerpts) of documents that were held by the church, or privately owned; the whereabouts of some of these is no longer known.

His first substantial contribution was a description of the older elements of St Peter's church, in seven parts (vii.1914 to viii.1915). He then went on to describe St Mary's church, in eleven parts (x.1915 to i.1917), and finally covered the main body of St Peter's in a further twelve parts (iii.1917 to ix.1918). All of this material on the churches was later assembled and augmented, and issued as a booklet (Varah 1928).

Varah's other contributions in the magazine included the contents of fifty Barton wills, ranging in date from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century (vii.1924 to iii.1939). He built upon Moor's list of vicars and published, in 71 parts, notes on the 'Vicarage of Barton' (ii.1919 to i.1927). Between them, Moor and Varah listed as many churchwardens as they could find (x, xii.1892; vii, viii, x.1915), and the latter assembled the names of recorded parish clerks and sextons (x.1920). Although the seventeenth-century churchwardens' account book for St Mary's was lost (see also Appendix 5), various extracts had been copied and these were published by Varah in a further series of articles (x.1912; ix.1925 to v.1936).

Several other short series, as well as many individual notes, also appeared. Finally, the civil history of Barton was tackled by Varah, in 55 parts (v.1939 to xi.1943).

Regrettably, primary sources relating to historical material were hardly ever cited in the magazine, and thus the accuracy of the assertions made needs careful checking, wherever

possible.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, in relation to the history of the churches, there is a noticeable tendency for matters which began as pure conjecture to be transmuted into dogma or ‘fact’ as time passed, and through frequent repetition. Varah’s tendency to cite precise dates, where none exist in the historical record, is seriously misleading: *e.g.* he quotes *c.* 790 for the construction of the western annexe of St Peter’s, 953 for the body of the tower, 1031 for the upper belfry, 1310 for the north aisle and rood window, and so forth (iv.1939). All are fictitious.

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2. When Moor and Varah wrote, much of the source material was preserved in the parish chests; they were also in possession of various notes assembled by historians such as Hesleden, Ball and Tombleson. Both the parish and the private material has become depleted over the past century, but most of what survives is now held in the Lincolnshire Archives. For example, LA: F.L. Misc. 10/2 is a mixed collection of notes and original documents deriving from Hesleden, Ball, Moor and Varah; many items were cited in *BPM*.