

## A Brief History of the Barton and Royle Homes

The institution of The Barton Charity, Turvey, Bedfordshire, originated in 1881 with a desire to provide an asylum for deserving and necessitous poor of Turvey and Bedford. The Founder of the almshouses and memorial hall was James Barton of Oakley House, Camden Road, London who was a manufacturer. A 'Deed of Gift of land at Turvey' was made by James Barton to the first Trustees of The James, Mary, & Louisa Barton Charity on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1884. It was upon this land at Station End, Turvey that the almshouses and memorial hall were erected and endowed in loving memory of Mary and Louisa Barton, by their brother, James Barton under the auspices of The James, Mary and Louisa Barton Charity. The almshouses were intended for the relief of twenty poor persons of good character and reputation, being inhabitants of the Parish of Turvey and of the Town of Bedford, both in the county of Bedford. The almshouses and memorial hall were officially opened on Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1885. The three weather damaged foundation tablets of 1885 were reproduced in 2008 and the new granite tablets have been installed over the original tablets in order that the intentions of the Founder, as set out on the tablets in 1885, did not further deteriorate and become lost.



**Engraving of the Almshouses and Memorial Hall, 1885**

The architecture was of the Tudor style, in red brick with stone dressings. The frontage had a length of 200 feet with a south aspect. The almshouses were built to house 10 married couples and 10 single persons. Each resident had two rooms, a bedroom and a little living room. They shared the use of a washhouse with kitchen and scullery. The accommodation was on two floors, and the ground floor of the central portion was for occupation by the Caretaker and his wife. The central block on the first floor had an Oriel window for the Board Room, surmounted by a turret clock, by *Benson* of London. In the rear of the building was the Memorial Hall, for holding religious services and entertainments. At one end there was an organ chamber with an organ built by *Messrs. Gray and Davison*, London. Above the decorated 8 feet open diapason pipes was a circular stained glass window. This window was saved and is installed in the end wall of the Community Hall.

The residents of the almshouses received weekly pensions from the Charity of 6/- for single persons and 8/- for married couples. It is noted in the 'Jubilee Souvenir Handbook' published in Bedford, April, 1935 that in the year 1916 the pensions were increased to 8/- a week for single persons and increased to 12/- per week for married couples which were in addition to the Pensioners' Old Age Pensions of 10/- per week each under the Government Scheme. In 1887, 1889 and 1893 further land adjoining the Institution was purchased by the Trustees, and this land was used as vegetable and flower gardens by the Pensioners and the Caretaker.

Improvements to the Victorian building were made; water had been drawn from a large well until 1913 when a continuous supply of water was installed from the Water Supply in the ownership of Captain Higgins of Turvey. In July 1922 electric light was installed produced from their own electric engine and plant, by 1935 electricity was being supplied by the Public Electric Supply and in 1928 the sanitary provisions were improved by the installation of a septic tank and new W.C.'s.

### **Creation of the Barton and Royle Homes (1963)**

However, it was due to the increasing costs involved in further improvements necessary to bring the Victorian building up to the required standard that led, in 1955, to an approach to the Charity Commission for their views on combining The James, Mary & Louisa Barton Charity with The Sir George Royle Trust. Sir George Royle, a former Mayor of Bedford, who had been made a Honorary Freeman of the Borough (of Bedford) on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1944, had left provision in his will (1950), 'The Sir George Royle Trust' for the establishment of almshouses for the people of Bedford. After years of negotiation a new Scheme was sealed and dated 27<sup>th</sup> September 1963 combining The James, Mary & Louisa Barton Charity with The Sir George Royle Trust, under the title of the Barton and Royle Homes.

There were still issues as to the most judicious method of modernising the existing building and on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1966 another Scheme was sealed that amended Clause 1 of the Principal Scheme to read that "immediately after the words 'administered and managed' there are inserted the words 'together as one Charity'. Item 3 allowed for the demolition of the existing building that would be replaced by 26 almshouses, 18 of which to be called the Royle Homes and the other 8 to be called the Barton Homes, and a chapel and communal room. The new bungalows were built in sections during the second half of 1966 and when a section of bungalows were ready they were occupied by existing residents of the Victorian building. Once the existing residents were re-housed the Victorian building was demolished. Subsequently the remaining properties and the Chapel/Community Hall were built.