

Great Barrow revisited

I took advantage of a family wedding in Cheshire between Christmas and New Year to visit Great Barrow. This is where the Company's benefactor Richard Gardner Williams is buried, and where his forebears farmed over many generations. I had a second reason for going to Great Barrow, in that, as the 1911 Census records, my father (Master of the Company 1973-4) lived there with his parents and two brothers in the early years of the 20th century.

Great Barrow is just a few miles east of Chester, in a fine position overlooking the Cheshire plain.



The village church, St Bartholemew's, is an elegant, largely 18th century building, whose origins go back at least to the 13th century. Several members of the Williams family served as Churchwardens. While Richard Gardner Williams left nine-tenths of his estate to the Turners' Company, the remaining tenth - over £4,000 in 1948 money, so a sizeable sum - went to the Churchwardens of Great Barrow, for the upkeep of the family memorials "in and about" St Bartholemew's

church. This money apparently still exists in a separate fund used for the maintenance of the church and churchyard.

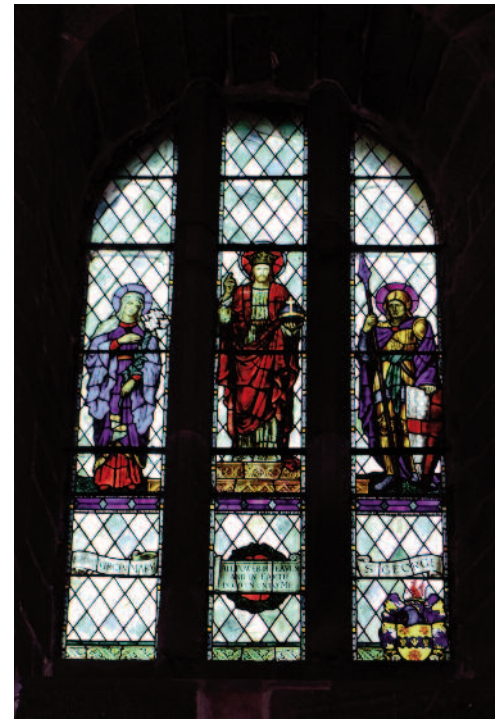
Shortly before his death in 1931, Richard Gardner Williams paid for a stained glass window at the west end of the church in memory of his parents, Thomas and Martha Williams, and of his elder brother

(another Thomas) and his wife. This, and the other family memorials beneath the tower of the church, are in good condition. When the old churchyard was full, Great Barrow acquired a new churchyard in 1925, across the lane from the old one.

Richard Gardner Williams is buried in the first row of the new churchyard, in the same grave as his wife and sister. The inscription on the stone is somewhat faded, but readable.

Other members of his family are in the old churchyard. I conclude that our benefactor's intention, in allocating part of his estate for the maintenance of the family memorials, continues to be met satisfactorily.

The Master



Oliver Stonehouse

Oliver Stonehouse, who died last year aged 84, joined the Company in 1951 and was a Court Assistant from 1971 to 1975.

Throughout his career he was closely involved in his family's worsted spinning business, MP Stonehouse.

This had been founded by his great-grandfather Matthew Porritt Stonehouse, formerly a sea captain, who built the company's first factory in Wakefield in 1854.

His family was closely associated with Wakefield over several generations. His grandfather was Sir Edmund Stonehouse, who was four times the Mayor of Wakefield in the years 1888 to 1917.

Oliver was educated at Uppingham School and during the war completed a degree in natural sciences in just two years (1942-44).

On graduating, he joined the Admiralty's Royal Corps of Naval Constructors where he stayed until 1948. He then joined the family business in which he rose to become the Managing Director and subsequently Chairman, until 1988, following the sale of the business in 1987.

Oliver continued the family tradition of civic involvement in Wakefield, and in the 1980s funded the refurbishment of the organ in Wakefield Cathedral.

The organ had previously been donated to the Cathedral by his father. He was also the Chairman of the Friends of Wakefield Art Gallery for 27 years until 1979.

After leaving the Admiralty, he maintained his military connections, through serving in the Territorial Army until 1954.

But one of his biggest enthusiasms was the sea, something he shared with his great grandfather. In 1978 this led him to fulfil a long-held ambition, when he sailed the Atlantic in the 31-foot *Miranda*.

The journey from Falmouth to the British Virgin Islands covered over 4,500 miles and took 44 days, Captain and crew arriving in the BVI in time for Christmas.

Following his retirement he continued to sail in both England and the BVI and also travelled extensively by road in his camper van 'Bambi' with his wife, covering over 100,000 miles in Europe.

Oliver and his wife regularly attended the Company's annual Patronal Service, through which he remained in touch with the Company and old friends.