

## Barns Hall or Barons hall

Rice Gwynn was a Welsh Barrister who lived at Little Snoring in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He was also buying up land in Fakenham In particular land at the West end of Fakenham Heath which had not yet been enclosed. He also bought the ancient mill at Malt Mill Common nearby. In 1595 he got permission to build a house in Fakenham, this was large E shaped house built in the style of the times.

In 1613 he moved to Fakenham where he was not popular because he had blocked up a 'Way' which ran past his house, a route used to drive livestock to the river for water. Local people removed the gates. This was also the overland way from the town to Norwich, it crossed the river near where the Three Brick Arches is today. The building of the railway in the 19<sup>th</sup> century disturbed much of the evidence of this 'Way' although some can be seen on the Testerton side of the river, This was the first stop on its village-hopping route to Norwich. The issue of this 'Way' was settled years later with the building of a road/turnpike over Fakenham Heath!

Over the following 300 odd years the Gwynn property passed down the family, many of which were named Rice! Sometimes the family were absentee landlords

When the Calthorpes became Lords of the Manor they were in dispute with the Gwynns over the issue of Copyhold of their lands, this dispute went on for some years until the Gwynns paid the fine which had been imposed on them. At the same time they were in dispute with the Landlord of the White Horse pub over the building of a mill in competition with theirs. The Gwynns were unpopular because of their Welsh accents.

A later generation built a substantial barn near the old house. This may be the origin of the old local name of Barn's Hall later to be confused as Baron's Hall. This barn outlived the old house and still exists today!

By 1812 the old house became unfit to live in so it was pulled down apart from the east wing which became cottages, the remains of this wing could still be seen in the 1970s. A new Barons Hall was built nearby in 1803/4.

In 1918 the property was sold off by and the new house became the headquarters of the Walsingham Rural District Council, an important administration centre during the Second World War. It was eventually turned into flats.

Fakenham still remember the Gwynns, in the Parish Church there is a memorial to Nicholas Gwyn MD (d. Ipswich 1798). On the east of the town is Gwyn Crescent while near the site of the old hall is Baron's Hall Lane. Part of the 'way' which ran past the hall is now Hall Close while some distance away is Baron's Close. Until recent times

Fakenham Football and cricket was played on Baron's Hall Lawn. This is now a housing estate! What would Rice Gwynn think of that one wonders?

*It is not known if the Gwyns referred to their property as Baron's Hall it may have been a local name adopted because the locals saw the Gwyns as a type of Barons because of their High Status.*