

COSTAR COACHING COMPANY

William Costar 1739 – 1802 and Richard Costar 1765 – 1840

(Both were buried in St Helen's Churchyard, Benson)

Uncle and cousin of William Costar of the Crown Inn, Benson

William Costar and his wife, Sarah (Pleasant) were innkeepers of the Crown Inn during the days when it was a thriving coaching inn. William's mother Kety Costard had a younger brother, also named William, (1739 – 1802) who became a successful coach proprietor, based in Oxford High Street. He described himself in an advertisement of 1766, as the son-in-law of John Shrubb. William had married John's daughter, Sarah Shrubb, the previous year and as a newly married man, was keen to be associated with a respected innkeeper like John, who had managed the White Hart Inn in Benson since 1753. John Shrubb and his partner, John Perry had also run coach services on the route between Oxford, Benson and London for many years. The advertisement below is from the Jackson's Oxford Journal of 1758.

JOHN SHRUBB at the White-Hart at BENSON,
AND
JOHN PERRY at the Star Inn in OXFORD,
Hereby give NOTICE,

THAT NOBLEMEN, GENTLEMEN, and OTHERS,
may by them be supplied with neat four-wheeled
POST CHAISES, and able Horses, at Nine-pence
a Mile, or four Horses and Chaise at Fifteen-pence, upon
any Turnpike Road : And they hope Gentlemen will re-
member that they are the first Proprietors of Post Chaises that
undertook to run at this Price from Oxford either upwards
or downwards : For which Reason though others have since
been obliged to come into it, yet they humbly hope that
those Gentlemen, who have already encouraged them, will
continue their Favours, which will be gratefully acknow-
ledged by their obedient, humble Servants,

JOHN SHRUBB,
JOHN PERRY.

By 1767, William was using the Cross Inn (now the Golden Cross Inn). He was a partner in a coaching company running services from Cirencester to London.

In 1778, William moved his coaching business to the Angel Inn, in Oxford High Street. William's wife, Sarah (nee Shrub) had worked at the White Hart, one of Benson's largest coaching inns, since 1758.

Benson's importance as a coaching stop was a direct result of its advantageous position on one of the routes between Oxford and London. One route went through High Wycombe and the alternative went through Henley. The Henley to Oxford road seems to have gained importance in Tudor times. This was partly because it was an alternative route to London but also because Henley was the head of navigation of the Thames for the large barges that could not easily navigate the shallows, mill-dams and flash locks on the upper reaches.

The following record sheds some light on the way in which eighteenth century coachmasters formed business partnerships with innholders in other counties. William describes (below) how he drove the Light Stage Coach himself, from Henley to his inn called the Red Lion at Benson and from thence to the Angel Inn, which he also owned. (William may have taken on the Red Lion after the death of James Kemp in 1777.) It appears that by 1784, William was in dispute with one of his London partners, with whom he had an agreement about how the coaches would be run.

This is the item concerning William COSTAR in 1785: *Exchequer Bills & Answers, Oxon, Geo. III. No. 54. COSTAR v. HARDER. A.D. 1785, Trin. 25 Geo. III.*

William COSTAR of city of Oxford innkeeper, complains that he and
Thomas HARDER of London, innholder

Robert GRAY of " "
William HANKS of Brentford, Middx., stage-master
William COX of Colnbrook, Middx., innholder
John SHRUBB of Bensington, Oxon., "
Stephen WENTWORTH of Kingston Inn, Oxon., "
Chrpr. BOLTON of Farringdon, Berks., "
George PHILLIPS of Fairford, Glouc., "
William BREWER of Cirencester, Glouc., "
Thomas MASTERS of do " stagemasters
Daniel MASTERS of do " & co-partners

were sometime previous to 29 Nov., 1784, proprietors of and copartners in the earnings & profits of the Light Stage Coach going to and from London to Cirencester, Tetbury and Stroudwater & which passed through the city of Oxford & put up at the Bell Savage Inn, Ludgate Hill, and that your orator did at that time work the said Light Stage Coach from Henley, co. Oxford, to his Inn called the Red Lyon at Bensington and from thence to the Angel Inn belonging to your said orator in the city of Oxford, being for the space of 23 miles . . . The deft. John SHRUBB's Inn the White Heart Inn at Bensington. Defts. refuse to let plt. work coach according to agreement.

ANSWER TO THOMAS HARDER et al.

Defts. plead a contra account & file a schedule of expenses & receipts.

An advertisement in the Oxford Journal of 1802 shows the coach services operated from the Angel Inn by Costar and Co.

ANGEL INN, OXFORD.
Royal Mail and Post Coach Office.

A POST COACH to London every Morning at Eight o'Clock, to the Old Bell, Holborn.

A COACH every Morning at Seven o'Clock, through Henley and Slough, to the Bell Savage, Ludgate Hill.

A POST COACH to London every Morning at Five o'Clock, to the George and Blue Boar, Holborn.

A POST COACH to Birmingham every Morning at Seven o'Clock.

A POST COACH to Birmingham and Shrewsbury every Night at Twelve o'Clock.

A POST COACH to Worcester every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday Mornings, at Seven o'Clock.

A POST COACH to Southampton every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday Mornings, at Six o'Clock.

ROYAL MAILS.

The Gloucester to London every Night at Half past Ten o'Clock, to the Golden Cross, Charing Cross, and the Angel, St. Clement's.

The Worcester to London every Night at Eleven o'Clock, to the Golden Cross, Charing Cross.

To Gloucester and Cheltenham every Morning at Four.

To Worcester and Ludlow every Morning at Four.

To Bath and Bristol every Morning at Five.

To Banbury every Morning at Five.

Performed by **COSTAR** and Co.

The Proprietors will not be answerable for Money, Jewels, Plate, or Things of above Five Pounds Value, unless entered as such, and paid for accordingly.

N. B. A Company may engage a whole Coach for London at any Hour.

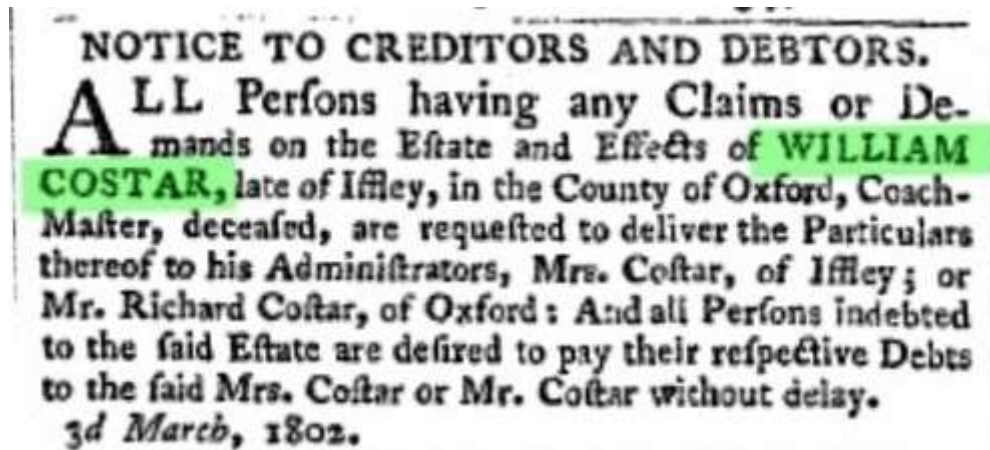
Jackson's Oxford Journal 1802

William Costar and Sarah (Shrubb) appear to have had only two surviving children, Richard in 1765 and Sarah in about 1767, before Sarah (Shrub) died in 1769. William then married Martha Coles, sister of Thomas Coles the elder (1746-1809), who was a coachmaker in Benson.

In August 1787, “Mr. Burford married Sarah Costar, daughter of the master of the Angel Inn. Oxford”. (*Oxfordhistory.org*)

William died in February 1802, leaving a widow, Martha. William was buried in St Helen’s Churchyard, Benson and Martha was buried next to him in 1820.

A notice in Jackson’s Oxford Journal in March 1802 (below) records that William lived in Iffley, Oxford and left a widow.



NOTICE TO CREDITORS AND DEBTORS.
ALL Persons having any Claims or Demands on the Estate and Effects of **WILLIAM COSTAR**, late of Iffley, in the County of Oxford, Coach-Master, deceased, are requested to deliver the Particulars thereof to his Administrators, Mrs. Costar, of Iffley; or Mr. Richard Costar, of Oxford: And all Persons indebted to the said Estate are desired to pay their respective Debts to the said Mrs. Costar or Mr. Costar without delay.
3d March, 1802.

Jackson’s Oxford Journal 1802

Mrs Costar, widow of the late Mr Costar, formerly master of the Angel Inn died in 1820. (Jackson’s Oxford Journal 1820).

At the start of the nineteenth century coachbuilding in the village of Benson employed 25 people in the yards near Castle Square (Birmingham Yard) and also at Littleworth. Many other men were employed in making wheels and harnesses for coaches as well as repairing them after accidents. Benson was the last village where horses could be changed on the journey from Oxford to London and at that time had stabling for at least 200 horses. An army of grooms and ostlers had to prepare the horses, so that they were ready immediately a coach arrived in the village. The horses could be changed over in a matter of minutes, so that there was a minimum delay for passengers.

Richard Costar (1765 – 1840) cousin of William Costar of the Crown Inn, Benson, took over his father’s flourishing coaching business. In those days there was fierce competition between the various coach companies as to which coaches were fastest, but safety was also a consideration. In 1807, a coach concern called the Union Stroudwater was running patented safety coaches.

They had a dispute with Mr. Costar of Oxford, who seized one of the coaches and locked it up at Oxford.

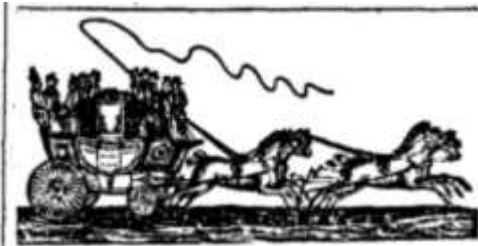
The Stroudwater patent coach featured an idle wheel, so that in the event of an accident causing a wheel to be lost, the idle wheel could replace it and the coach could continue its journey without inconvenience to its passengers.

In those days a single coach could require 150 horses to be kept at the stages along the route. The fastest coaches could achieve speeds of 12 miles per hour, but the average was considerably less.

Richard Costar, coach proprietor, was based in Oxford at the Angel Inn, but he maintained close links with Benson, where his grandparents, had lived. He kept his horses at stables in Birmingham Yard, opposite the White Hart in Benson. He also used the Benson craftsmen to repair his coaches.

From 1805 until 1835, Richard was an agent for the Royal Mail and ran coaches to all parts of the country, as can be seen from the coach timetables, published in the Oxford Journal (see below). He was said to own over 300 horses, for which he needed a granary at Benson.

In 1824, Richard Costar's niece, Sarah Burford married Christopher Waddell in Cowley, Oxford. They had eight children. By 1831, Richard was in partnership with Christopher Waddell, and together they operated from the Angel, the Mitre, the Star and the Roebuck inns in Oxford, which was at its zenith as a coaching centre.



**OXFORD AND LONDON
WHITE HORSE COACH.**

THE Members of the University and Inhabitants of the City of Oxford, are respectfully informed, that the Proprietors of the above Coach have altered the time of its starting both from London and Oxford; and that in future it will leave both the White Horse Cellar, Piccadilly, and Angel Inn, Oxford, at *TEN o'clock* precisely. The Proprietors beg leave to add, that in consequence of repeated applications from many of their most respectable friends, they have discontinued the Sunday's journey.

PERFORMED BY

EAMES, *White Horse, Fetter-lane,
and Angel, St. Clement's;*
CHARLTON, ... *Hounslow;*
SHRUBB, *Benson;*
COSTAR,
STEVENS, *Oxford.*

Oxford, August 17, 1821.

**THE CHAMPION
Post Coach,
From LONDON, through Wycombe,
TO HEREFORD.**

AN elegant POST COACH starts from the BOLT-IN-TUN, FLEET-STREET, and the ANGEL, ST. CLEMENT'S, every morning at Twelve o'clock, through Uxbridge, Wycombe, Oxford, Witney, Burford, Cheltenham, Gloucester, Hereford, and South Wales, to MILFORD HAVEN, where it meets the Packets for Ireland.

The above Coach calls in coming out of London at the White Horse Cellar and Gloucester Coffee House, Piccadilly, the Dolphin, opposite the Old Green Man and Still, and the Gloucester Warehouse, Oxford-street, at Half past Twelve; arrives at the Angel, Oxford, at Half past Seven, leaves at Eight for Hereford, &c.

PERFORMED BY

R. COSTAR,
R. WILLIAMS,
J. HEATH,
J. BOSLEY,
And Co.

In 1813, Richard Costar owned 350 acres of meadow and pasture adjoining the turnpike road in Oxford. In 1825, he bought the estate of Blackbird Leys, Oxford. At Blackbird Leys Costar grew oats, beans and hay for his horses, as he did on the nearby Sawpit Farm in Littlemore. (*Blackbird Leys estate was built in the 1960s on the site of Sawpit Farm.*) In 1838, he was recorded as a tenant of Oriel lands in Littlemore, Oxford.

A contemporary wrote about Richard Costar in the 1830s, "*The coaches were horsed by Richard Costar, as great an original as any of his men. He lived in his picturesque house on the Cherwell, just opposite Magdalen turnpike. He had two entrances, one on either side of the pike, so that he could always elude payment.*"

October 25, 1821.



From the Star and Angel Inns
COACH OFFICES.

THE STAR Coach every morning at nine,
to the George and Blue Boar, Holborn, London.

The AURORA every day at half-past eleven, to
the George and Blue Boar, Holborn, London.

The COURIER every day at twelve, to the Swan
with Two Necks, Lud Lane, Cheapside, London.

The RETALIATOR every day at a quarter before
one, to the Old Bell, Holborn, London.

The AURORA every day at half-past twelve, to
the Hop Pole Inn, Worcester.

The COURIER every day at one, to the Hen and
Chickens, and Swan Hotels, Birmingham.

The RETALIATOR every day at three, to the
Plough Hotel, Cheltenham.

The STAR every day at three, to the Bear Inn,
Woodstock.

Performed by COSTAR, COLES, and Co.

Jackson's Oxford Journal 1821

Richard Costar died at the age of 74 in 1840 on 26th September and his death was reported in the Oxford Journal. Following his death, most of his assets were sold, as he did not leave any direct descendants.

The following account of his impressive funeral confirms that although he lived mainly in St Clements, Oxford, he was buried in St Helens churchyard.

FUNERAL OF RICHARD COSTAR, ESQ.

The remains of this highly-respected gentleman were yesterday removed from his residence in St. Clement's, and interred in the family vault at Benson, in this county. At 11 o'clock the hearse and three mourning coaches, with the private carriage of the deceased, were drawn up in front of his house, and soon after the coffin was brought out and placed in the hearse; and the family and friends having taken their positions in the first carriage, the other coaches were filled with the book-keepers and the various coachmen in the service of Messrs. Costar and Waddell, all of whom were anxious to pay this last mark of respect to so good and kind a master, and appeared to be deeply affected at their loss. The hearse was driven by a veteran who has grown grey in the service (W. Bower, better known as *Black Will*); the next driver was T. Paine, a very old servant; the next Charles Holmes, the driver of the *Blenheim*; and after them came Stacey, the driver of the *Defiance*. On their arrival at Benson the cavalcade halted at the hotel, and the corpse was carried to the church, followed in procession by all the party on foot, with other friends who joined at Benson. The age on the coffin was stated to be 74.

Above: Jackson's Oxford Journal Sep 1840

Following the death of Richard Costar, all his assets were advertised for sale. These included all his farm stock, machinery, wagons, carts, carriages, horses, harness, hay etc. on his farms at Blackbird Leys and Littlemore, Oxford. Some of the property belonging to his partner Christopher Waddell was also for sale.

In 1842, Richard Costar's heirs sold the Blackbird Leys and Littlemore farms to Christopher Waddell, his junior partner, but by the 1840s, Waddell was competing with the railways.

Costar and Waddell tried to adapt their services to those of the trains. In 1839, they operated two coaches daily to Aylesbury Station and in 1840 met every train to Steventon (Berks). They ran coaches from Steventon to Birmingham, connecting with trains to the north of England. As railways extended their routes across the country, there was no longer money to be made from stage-coaches and soon coaching inns stood deserted.

Excellent Travelling Carriage, Britska, Stanhope Gig, Set of Pair-horse Carriage Harness, and Six Coach Horses.

T O B E S O L D B Y A U C T I O N,
By GILES & SON,

THIS DAY, Saturday, June 26, at the Star Hotel Yard, Corn Market, Oxford, at Three o'clock,—An excellent BRITSKA or TRAVELLING CARRIAGE, painted yellow, lined drab, leather head and cover, with dickey behind and before, patent lamps and drag, in good preservation, built by *Eldridge*, of Longacre; a ditto, painted dark green, lined drab, to carry six persons, built by *Field*, of Beaumont-street, Marylebone, London; an excellent STANHOPE GIG, with Patent Boxes, &c. built by *Shacklesford*, of Oxford; a very neat light CHAISE CART, in good preservation; and a Set of Pair-horse CARRIAGE HARNESS (nearly new), the property of the late *Richard Costar*, Esq.

Also SIX MACHINE HORSES, suitable to farmers, carriers, boatmen, and others, the property of Mr. Christopher Waddell.

May be viewed the morning of sale.

Advertisement from Jackson's Oxford Journal 1841
 Sale of Richard Costar's travelling carriage, chaise and gig

Notice of Sale of Valuable LIVE and DEAD FARMING STOCK.

MESSRS. GILES and SON beg most respectfully to announce that they have received instructions from the Executrix and Executor of the late *Richard Costar*, Esq. to SELL by AUCTION, on the farms at Blackbird Leys and Littlemore, near Oxford, part of the valuable LIVE and DEAD STOCK of SHEEP, PIGS, HORSES, Ricks of HAY, Implements, &c. Full particulars in next week's Journal.

Sale of the stock of Richard Costar's farms at
 Blackbird Leys and Littlemore, Oxford

To Farmers, Carriers, and others.

TEN USEFUL MACHINE HORSES.

T O B E S O L D B Y A U C T I O N,
By GILES and SON,

On Saturday next the 24th of October, at the Star Hotel Yard, Corn Market, Oxford, at Three o'clock precisely,—Ten useful COACH HORSES, the property of Messrs. *Costar* and Waddell.

May be seen the morning of sale.

Sale of coach horses owned by Costar and Waddell.

Valuable FARMING STOCK, 320 TONS of prime MEADOW HAY (to go off), the growth of 1838, 1839, and 1840; SHEEP, PIGS, HORSES, In-calf Alderney COW, superior IMPLEMENTS of HUSBANDRY, excellent STANHOPE GIG, &c. &c.

At Littlemore, near Oxford.

T O B E S O L D B Y A U C T I O N ,
By GILES & SON,

(By order of the Executrix and Trustee), on Tuesday and Wednesday next the 1st and 2d days of December, on the premises at Littlemore, near Oxford,—Part of the valuable LIVE and DEAD FARMING STOCK of the late **Richard Costar, Esq.**; comprising 300 Southdown and half-bred store lambs, 2 half-bred tups; 20 useful horses; 66 store pigs and sows, and 6 fat hogs; 8 excellent iron-arm six-inch, nine-inch, and narrow-wheel wagons, and 1 capital lamb wagon, with tilt; 6 nearly new six-inch wheel dung carts, and 2 six-inch wheel Dutch carts; capital large iron roll, and a double shaft oak ditto; excellent scarifler, with wheels, shafts, &c. complete; 7 iron ploughs, 2 drills, drag harrows, 5 pair of small ditto, land presser, horse hoe, winnowing machine; chaff-cutting machine, 2 turnip cutters, oil-cake cutter, 65 dozens of fold hurdles, 215 sheep racks, cages, and troughs, cow cribs, harness for 16 horses, corn bins, &c.; about 320 tons of very prime meadow hay (to go off), standing in the rick yard, adjoining the high turnpike road, at Littlemore, Oxon.

Two months' credit will be allowed on the Hay, by a deposit being paid at the time of sale, and approved security given for the remainder.

The sale will commence on the first day, Tuesday, at *Eleven* o'clock; and on Wednesday, the second day, at *Seven* o'clock, for the sale of the Sheep and Hay.

Catalogues to be obtained at the Catherine Wheel, Henley; Red Lion, High Wycombe; Lamb, Wallingford; New Inn, Abingdon; White Hart, Witney; Marlborough Arms, Woodstock; King's Arms, Bicester; Greyhound Thame; and of the auctioneers, Oxford.

Sale of farm stock, wagons, carts, machinery, hay etc. at
Richard's farm adjoining the turnpike road at Littlemore, Oxford.

VALUABLE FREEHOLD PROPERTY.

A most desirable GENTLEMANLY RESIDENCE, and very extensive BUSINESS PREMISES, adapted to Woulstaplers, Fellmongers, Maltsters, Corn Dealers, and others requiring spacious Premises, near to the River Thames, and on the high London Road, pleasantly situated at BENSON, Oxfordshire,

T O B E S O L D B Y A U C T I O N,
By GILES and SON,

(By order of the Executrix and Trustees of the late Richard Costar, Esq.) on Wednesday the 19th day of May, at the White Hart Inn, Benson, Oxon, at Three o'clock in the afternoon.

Lot 1.—All those desirable and extensive PREMISES, situate opposite to the White Hart Inn, Benson, Oxon; consisting of stabling for 34 horses, divided into four substantially brick-built and slated stables, with hay and corn lofts over the same, and a brick-built corn warehouse, 40 feet long, with loft over; (these buildings are well calculated for Business Premises, or may be easily converted into Tenements); large Yard, Paddock, and walled in Garden, together about one acre and a half.—Also a newly and substantially-built genteel DWELLING HOUSE, fronting the street, small Garden, inclosed with iron palisading, in the occupation of Miss Saunders; and THREE Stone-built COTTAGES, in the occupation of Messrs. Plaister, Adkinson, and Hern.

The whole of the above premises are Freehold, very compact, all inclosed, adjoining the high London Road, and near to the River Thames, which renders them very desirable for many kinds of business.

Lot 2.—That valuable FREEHOLD and GENTLEMANLY RESIDENCE, called *Church Field House*, most delightfully situated facing the River Thames, commanding fine views of the surrounding country and interesting scenery, and every way adapted for a family of the highest respectability. The house consists of a large entrance hall, dining and drawing room, breakfast parlour, study, excellent kitchen, pantry, wine and beer cellars, and five pleasant airy bed chambers; good stable, with loft over, lock-up coach-house, cow-house, orchard, and large garden, inclosed with a brick wall.

May be viewed on application to Mr. Edward Shrubb, Benson; and further particulars obtained from Messrs. H. and J. Walsh, solicitors, New Inn Hall-street, or of the auctioneers, Oxford.

Above: Jackson's Oxford Journal 1841

In this advertisement the executors of Richard Costar are selling a dwelling house opposite the White Hart, Benson (where he owned Birmingham Yard) and a "Gentlemanly Residence" called Church Field House, near the river Thames at Benson. From February to June 1840, Church Field House had been advertised for rent, with details available at the Angel Coach Office.

Richard Costar wrote his will on 14th July 1821, at the age of 56 and died on 25th September 1840, aged 74.

He left his fortune to his only sister, Sarah. Shortly after his death, Sarah's daughter, Martha swore on oath that she had found the will in a chest in a locked room next to Richard's bedroom, where he was in the habit of keeping his papers. Martha was then legally recognised as the sole executrix of her uncle's will.

Richard's sister, Sarah had married a surgeon, called Richard Burford in August 1787, but she was widowed in 1801. Sarah and Richard Burford had several children. Their only surviving son, Edward was married. At one time, he had been a coach driver. In 1821, when Richard wrote his will, Edward had three unmarried sisters, who with their mother, were beneficiaries of the will.

However, the will only provided for the three sisters as long as they remained spinsters. The youngest sister married Christopher John Waddell in 1824, and Waddell became Richard Costar's business partner.

In 1841, Sarah Burford, widow, was living in Cowley with her unmarried daughter, Martha.

Richard Costar was a large landowner in Oxford, Benson, Cogges and London.

He left all his estate in Cowley, where he lived to his sister, Sarah Burford. This included his house, garden, grounds, coachhouses, stables and outbuildings, and his arable lands in the fields of Cowley. After, Sarah's death, all the property should pass to her three unmarried daughters: Hannah, Martha and Sarah Burford.

The will records Richard's other estates including:

Properties in Church Street, Soho and Wardour Street, Soho. London

A freehold estate in the parish of Cogges, Oxfordshire, including coachhouses and stables.

A freehold estate at Littlemore, in the parish of Sandford, Oxfordshire including buildings and stabling.

Properties in Benson, Oxfordshire in the occupation of Mr Arthur, a coachmaker and Mr Jones, a harness maker.

(In 1833, Benjamin Arthur of Benson retired as a coachmaker and handed over to his son, Charles.)

Freehold garden, orchard, stables, granary and fields at Benson, occupied by Mrs Sarah Shrubbs.

Richard's sister, Sarah Burford died in 1846 and was buried in St Helen's churchyard, Benson.

Jane Farquharson 2015