

THE BOOK OF BARNSTAPLE

DIAMOND JUBILEE EDITION

Avril Stone (née Barthram)

Barnstaple lies on the River Taw estuary some five miles from the sea. At the point where the River Yeo meets the Taw the town of Barnstaple was born. The date of the town's origin has long been the subject of historical argument. However, it boldly and with great certainty celebrated its millennium in 1930. For many centuries Barnstaple was prominent in the wool industry and was a busy port for trade and commerce. Up until the early-twentieth century it even had its own shipyards, and vessels docked at Rolle Quay and Castle Quay until 1960. A fair has been welcomed in the town since time immemorial and probably began as a yearly gathering where trading of goods and chattels took place. Today, modern Barnstaple with its hi-tech commerce, industry, education and tourism sits easily alongside the traditional historical town with its Alms-houses, Pannier Market, Carnival and Fair.

First published in 2002 and quickly sold out, this new edition of *The Book of Barnstaple*, published to coincide with the Diamond Jubilee, brings the story of the community fully up to date. A new section highlights what has happened since the book was first issued. Agricultural crises have left their mark on Barnstaple and the surrounding countryside. The loss of the town centre cattle market in 2003 was a further blow to the farming community who for hundreds of years had visited the town on a Friday to buy and sell their livestock. But Avril Stone shows how the town has survived strongly the dawn of this new age and features: the new Western Bypass and Downstream Bridge which has relieved Barnstaple's traffic jams and given a more relaxing atmosphere to the newly revamped Square and Strand; Barnstaple trading families who have stood the test of time; visits to Barnstable USA and the making of Barnstaple's only overseas Burgess; some of the sporting activities and facilities that have developed during the last ten years in the town; the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen's Hall, now the Queen's Theatre Trust, and its history of the North Devon Festival; and, finally, Barnstaple's celebrations of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee. This unique publication is a vital record of the history and inhabitants of the ancient town of Barnstaple, presented in a single volume for all to treasure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

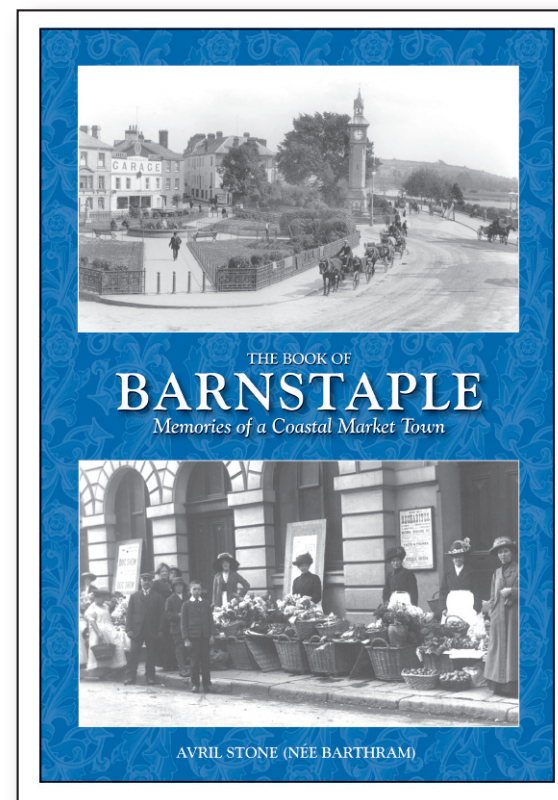
Avril Stone (née Barthram) is a native of Barnstaple. After her first successful book on High Bickington village, she decided to tackle the momentous task of capturing the past century of social history in her home town. She spent many months interviewing local people and collecting photographs which together create this record of life in their town. She pays warm tribute to everyone who so readily gave their time and their memories.

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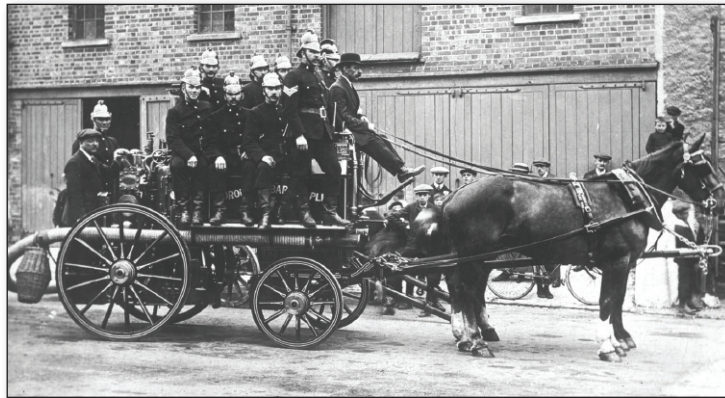
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Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee, June 2012.



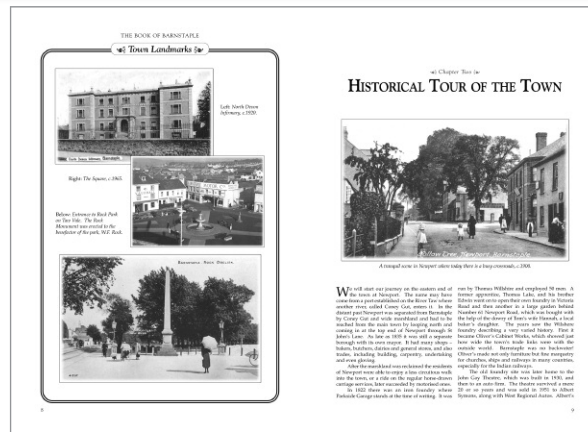
The Theatre Royal in Boutport Street, which became the Gaumont Cinema in 1931.



Right: Barnstaple's Fire Brigade in the early-twentieth century.
Below: Bale's Garage on the Square in 1926.



Example of a double-page spread.



Aerial view of Barnstaple's two bridges – ancient and modern – the new Western by-pass bridge seen here whilst under construction.



The High Street in the late 1920s.