



**HENRY BURGUM
OF BRISTOL AND TICKENHAM**

PENNANT REPRINTS N^o 4

TICKENHAM

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PART 1

THE MAN

Henry Burgum was born at Littledean in 1739. In 1752 he left the Forest of Dean to take up an apprenticeship in Bristol with Alan Bright, a pewterer. This was for seven years, when from the age of 20 it is said that he "rose by his own industry"; indeed in 1764, a local newspaper reported that Henry Burgum, Pewterer and Worm Maker, was moving house, and went on to describe his wares. His business was successful and he went into partnership with George Catcott, the son of the Master of Bristol Grammar School.

In 1765, and now described as an eminent pewterer, he married Miss Betty Copner, "rich in every requisite that makes the honourable state amiable". That apparently included money. His standing in local society appears to have progressed in leaps and bounds, and within two years he had become Deputy Governor and Treasurer of the Corporation of the Poor, and President of the Grateful Society.

In 1767, he had his portrait painted by the Nailsea born artist John Simmons. It hangs in the Georgian House in Bristol, and it may give a clue to the vanity which was to lead to such distress later. He desperately sought acceptance from his more cultured peers. He emulated their pomposity and was rather too fond of his almost aristocratic status.

At about this time he met up with Thomas Chatterton, a young poet. Having found some ancient documents in St Mary Redcliffe, Chatterton, enthralled by their language and style, invented a mediaeval monk, named Thomas Rowley, and created a series of historical poems alleged to have been written by the monk.

Chatterton approached Burgum and told him that he had found something in St Mary's called the "De Bergham Pedigree", which went back to the time of William the Conqueror. Poor Henry was completely taken in. But that was not all. Chatterton when only 17, in a fit of bitterness, produced a will in which he attacked and lampooned many of those who had assisted him, including Burgum who was mortified to discover his pedigree was a fake.

Humiliation by Chatterton was followed by attacks on his character by a rogue named James Thistlethwaite. Burgum began to neglect his business, and to pursue other interests, principally his love of music. He was eventually declared bankrupt in 1783. Three years later, having lost the use of his limbs through gout, he found himself in a debtors' prison in London, but was rescued by Bristol friends. In 1788, "The Messiah" was performed in Bristol for his benefit.

The following year he died at his home in Bristol, but was buried by the font in the church at Tickenham, where in better days he had owned a country "place" now again called Tickenham House.

PART 2

THE HOUSE

When Tickenham House was sold in 1982 as part of Hale's Farm, it was described by the agents as late 18th century, built by Burgum, and a listed building. Whether Burgum built it from scratch is not clear; it could have been a development of an earlier farmhouse. More recently the parapet clearly shown in the 1982 brochure has been removed.

By 1806 it was in the Gordon family ownership, with John Alvis the tenant, the first of many 'Alvis' to live in Tickenham. In the 1840s Dr Davis lived there, and a small building in front of the house described in 1982 as a "slated summer-house", was his surgery. In 1883, another John Alvis, and a tenant died; his gravestone is clearly readable from about half way along the path in Tickenham churchyard. But by now the farm and houses were part of Smyth's Ashton Court estate, and the new tenant was Henry Marsh.

In 1910, Hale's Farm was taken over by Mr Thompson, the manager of the Estate, for a few years until 1918 when William McEwen-Smith came over from Aust. He took up the tenancy as he thought, only to be told two years later by Napier, the agent, that it was to be sold, and, if he wanted to stay, he would have to buy. This was but another of the sales by the Ashton Court Estate at that period.

William McEwen-Smith's son Eric was born in the house, and still lives in Tickenham. As a youth he can remember his father triumphantly coming home one day to say that he had made the final payment, and the place was his.

Eric can also remember seeing dates of around 1760 cut into the lead on the roof; so that could suggest that the house had been built by then. In one part of the cellars, there is a glazed window in what was the outer wall, but then had a wall against it which was part of a catchment tank for rainwater from the roof. This served the household for some time, as mains water did not reach the village until 1921, though some Estate houses were served some thirty years earlier.

Water is of course a most important factor in the running of a farm carrying livestock, and a policeman of before the first world war called Duck was a proficient water diviner. He thought that wells at Hale's Farm, Wellhouse Farm, Batch Farm and Luggards Cross Farm were all fed by an underground stream starting from a spring on the ridge to the north. One of the Hale's Farm wells was over 100 feet (30 metres) deep and cut into sheer rock after the first few feet.

Not long after the second world war, the local historian Gray Usher ("Moorman" of the Mercury) with some archaeologists found the foundations of some sort of foundry on Mog's Ground just above the house. Now Henry Burgum was a

pewterer, and worked with other metals. Have we come back to the beginning again?

Acknowledgments:

Part 1. The Man - Detail supplied by Douglas Burgum

Part 2. The House - Mr and Mrs E McEwen-Smith.

Previously published in Pennant Nod 1-3

Postscript by Phyllis Horman

In the will of Sir Edmond Gorges of Wraxall, dated April 1511 is the following (which I will write in modern day wording to make easier reading):-

Item "I bequeath to my son William Gorges the manor of Birdcombe with the appurtenances lying in Wraxall, Nailsea, Tickenham, Portishead."

Item "I bequeath to my son William Gorges the Hole House and the Mogg House with all the appurtenances lying within the parish of Tickenham to be had (?) and hold the said manor of Birdcombe with all the appurtenances lying in Wraxall Nailsea, Tickenham and Portishead and also the Hole House and the Mogg House with all their appurtenances lying in Tickenham parish to the aforesaid William Gorges and to his heirs in fee forever. And if it so be the said William Gorges die without heirs of his body lawfully begotten that then the said manor of Birdcombe with all the appurtenances and the Hole House and the Mogg House return again to the right heirs of me the aforesaid Sir Edmond Gorges."

The Hole House and the Mogg House are reputed to have been on or near the site of present day Hales Farm. It is interesting to note the words or names HALE (or HOLE?) and MOGG (or MOG?) are in the present day names. There could be another explanation of Hales Farm; was there ever a family called Hale living there?

By the way a Hole House was where a game not unlike bowls was played and a Mogg House was "a place for idling in" (an old fashioned sports complex! according to Hallswell)

David Chappell tells me that in talking to Mrs McEwen-Smith she informed him that there is still a flat area where Mummings may have performed.

Other references that preceded the will mentioned above were

Theobald Gorges

1469/70 Messuage called Hole House or Hale House

Tickenham and 1470 the manor of Hale house and

Tickenham was held by Agnes Wake and Edmund Gorges