

The story of The Grange, Lower Bourton

Researched & collated by Neil B. Maw

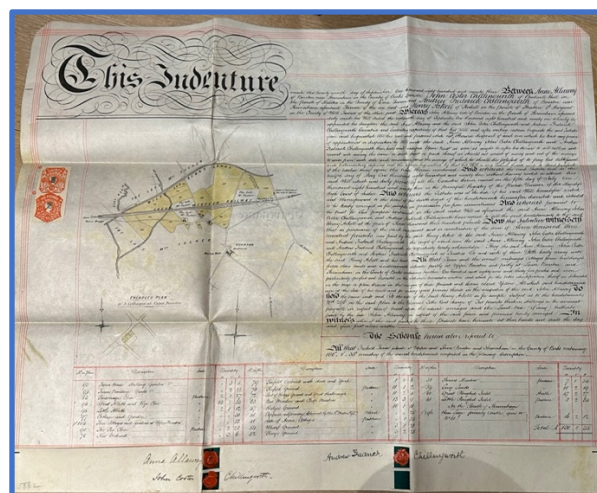


The story of The Grange is a continuation from the SHS listing that explains how John Tucker purchased Parsonage Farm, (SHS N1337) on which, the Parsonage Mansion House once stood. We know that Henry Tucker purchased the Lower Farm but we don't have the documentary evidence for the details, whereas we do now have the documents for John Tucker's purchase of the Parsonage Farm. The two brothers were extremely wealthy, both being in the silk business. John was a Silk Printer, and he had a large factory at West Ham, Essex. (Then a village - now Greater London). Although his business interests and a large farm were at West Ham, his personal interests were still at his native Bourton and especially Highworth, for in May 1851 he married Sarah Smith of Parsonage Farm. It's tempting to think there might be some connection between the two Parsonage Farms, but no evidence has been found yet. At 26 years, Sarah was half John Tucker's age and it's likely to have been an arranged marriage of convenience. There was another building on the site of the Grange but it's unclear if it was the Parsonage Mansion house that was taken down and replaced. It is known that John had connections in farming and silk in Holland and that may have influenced him to build the Grange House that still stands today with the Dutch gables. Two of the finials at the front of the house are initialled and dated J.T. & 1849. (See below). But after its completion and his marriage two years later, John's health was

in serious decline, largely in part to his being hugely overweight, reported to be 32 stones (203 kgs) at his death on 5th August 1856, aged 49. (Essex Standard 8th August 1856).



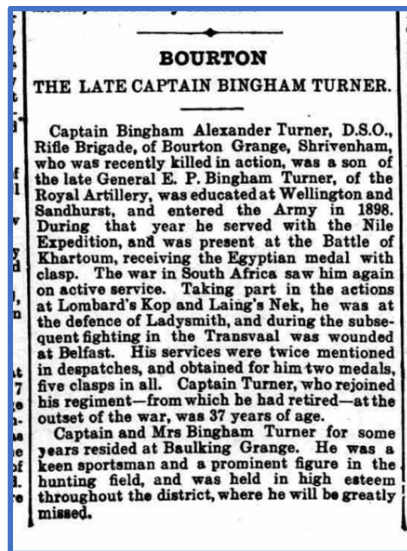
In his Will he left his Bourton estate to Sarah as well as a large sum of money. Sarah went on to marry William Farrow Lawrence in September 1858. He was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons aged 37 and they moved to Bath where William was a successful surgeon, and they had four children. She left the running of her Bourton estate by leasing it to John Allaway who seems to have been a close family friend. When Sarah died on 25th July 1887, the estate was put up for sale and purchased by John Allaway for £6400. A subsequent newspaper article stated that during the 50 years that he had occupied the farm, the rent was never altered; perhaps confirmation that he was a close friend and possibly a relative by marriage. After he died in 1893 the estate was again put up for auction on 21st August of that year and was purchased by Henry Arkell for £7300. (Below). The Arkell family are successful brewers and still operate a large brewery at Kingsdown near Swindon. (Swindon Advertiser 26th August 1893).



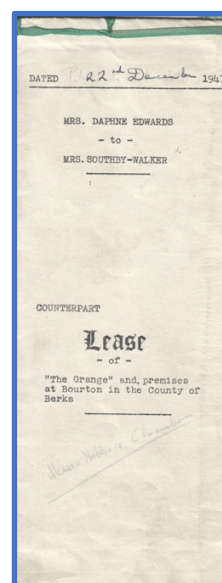
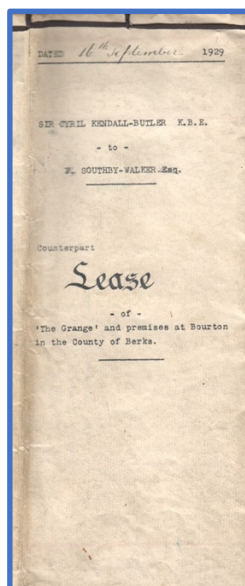
The Bourton House papers (BHP) have provided much more information on the history of the Grange. There is a copy of the conveyance in excellent condition dated 29th September 1900, between Henry Arkell of the Grange, Bourton, Farmer and Cyril Kendall-Butler of Bourton House Esq. (Below) Cyril had purchased Bourton House and associated land attached to it in 1894, but curiously, there are no documents relating to the purchase in the Bourton House papers. He paid £9,000 for the Grange and farm. It's also interesting to note in the schedule that No 93 is 'now known as The Grange.'



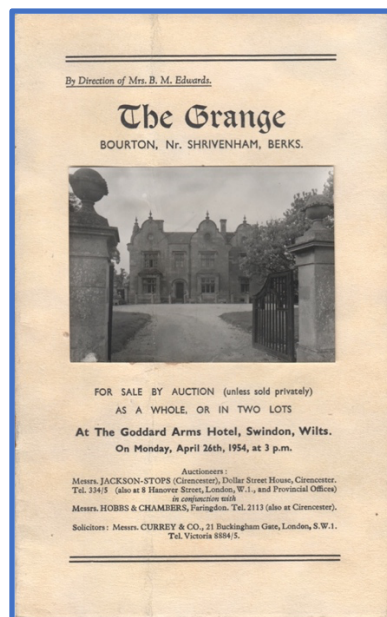
The lack of documentation makes it less clear who occupied it from 1900. The Electoral Registers suggest that the Arkell family were renting it with the name Albert Victor Arkell in the early years. In May of 1914, Captain Bingham Turner of Baulking, late Captain in the Rifle Brigade, signed a 14-year lease for the Grange at £120 per annum. However, unfortunately, he was killed in action as the newspaper article below described (Faringdon Advertiser 12th December 1914). In 1919 a Mrs Edward Fuller was offered a lease by Cyril Butler for 7 or 14 years at the rate of £120 per annum.



Further documents show that in September 1929 Francis Southby-Walker of Littleton, Winchester received a lease for £200 per annum. He died at Bourton in February 1949, but he is likely to have been ill for some time as we have documentation of a lease to Mrs Southby-Walker dated 22nd December 1947. She took on the rental of the property on an annual basis. There is further evidence of this by a note written by Francis in September 1946 giving one year's notice to quit. (Below - both leases). It's not clear how long Mrs Southby-Walker stayed on at the Grange after the death of her husband.



By 1950, the Butler's daughter Daphne, was finding the ownership of the Grange to be hard work and tiresome. There are numerous agreements and bundles of letters dating from 1950 from John Cornthwaite Welburn, a Harrogate Electrical Power Engineer, who had a rental agreement for the Grange and the cottage adjacent. There are similar documents concerning a Mary Ellen Poucher who took on the Grange and cottage but there were problems when her husband was discharged from the Royal Navy with health problems in 1954. A serious attempt to sell the property by auction at the Goddards Hotel, Swindon was made in the same year. A catalogue was produced (below) and everything was set fair for the Grange to be sold to the highest bidder. However, nobody turned up - there was no interest. A series of letters in the file show a frustrating line of purchasers who would go through the process of conveyance only to pull out at the last moment. The asking price started at £4,500 in 1954 and only eventually sold in 1955 for £3000 to Miss E.T. Simmons and Mr M. Jacobs.



Mark Jacobs and Elizabeth Simmons were listed in the Electoral Registers at The Grange right the way through to 1965. We were given information by a friend of the family that in the late 1960s and 1970s the house privately was occupied by the Artist Trewin Copplesstone, who was married to Audrey Levy a Textile Designer. He was described

by sources online as a Artist, Publisher, Lecturer and Broadcaster. He had his own publishing company but was forced to sell it when his business took a downturn.

info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk