

# John William Burnett of Hall Farm, Chaddesden

John W Burnett 1884-1949

John William Burnett was the son of a farmer, Arthur Burnett and his wife Emily of Ardsley Farm, Hollington, Derbyshire. He had been born at Long Lane, near Ashbourne, Derbyshire. By 1901 the family had moved to Woodborough in Nottinghamshire where they were tenant farmers at Hertford, later known as Woodborough Manor, then owned by William Bradshaw. They may have been there in 1915 when the manor was taken over as a recuperation home. The local Woodborough website carries the following photo and information: 'Mr Bradshaw let the property to Mr Arthur Burnett, a Shire horse keeper according to Kelly's Directories of 1895 and 1899. The Burnett family took in farm students and one of them, Nat Gould, preferred racing and became a reporter for a Newark newspaper. He became the Dick Francis of his time writing some 20 books. One of these, 'Blue Cap', was based on Woodborough Manor. Locally it is thought that the non-uniformed people in the photo could have been members of the Burnett family. Arthur died at the Manor in 1904 but his widow continued to farm there.



In 1911 John W Burnett was still living at Woodborough with his now widowed mother and the youngest sister Kathleen and in 1912 he married Nellie Richardson and began to farm in his own right. It is easy to confuse this John William Burnett with a farmer of the same name and similar age who lived and farmed at Stocker Flatts (or Stock o'Flatts) farm on Field Lane, Alvaston. However, both men were living locally throughout the 1940's and both died within weeks of each other.

John W Burnett of Long Lane next appears in August 1921 where he was breeding Shire horses, as had his father before him, and he was based at Park View, Weston Underwood. He won two classes at the Belper Horse Show that year. During this time he sued a coach driver for travelling too fast on a narrow road near his home and running over his spaniel which was standing in the road. He claimed to have been a steeplechase jockey and a motorist and could therefore judge the speed of the vehicle. The driver was found guilty on this evidence. He continued living and training horses at Weston Underwood until around 1931 when he appeared at Field Farm Chaddesden where he entered the local agricultural show at Locko Park and won prizes for his mangolds and cabbages. In 1932 as a tenant farmer he was elected onto the Derby Agricultural Society. He still kept his hand in with horses and in 1934 he entered one of them, 'Big Boy' in the Lady Harrington Cup but was an also-ran.

In 1935, still at Field Farm in Chaddesden he won a local ploughing match and the following year was to be found entering a motor cycle race at Donington park with the Derby and District Motor Club on an under 1,100 c.c. Velocette. By March 1937 he had taken over Hall Farm, formerly the Home farm of Chaddesden Hall and it was from here that his daughter Maisie was married. Later that year he was sitting on the Chaddesden Parish Council along with Messrs T Poyser, H F Leuty and E Bennett and was heavily involved in all areas of Chaddesden life. In 1936, as the tenant of Corporation and Racecourse Farm, Chaddesden, he appeared in court in dispute with neighbouring farmer Everard Johnson of Roe Farm. It was alleged that over a number of years between 40 and 50 cattle from Roe Farm had strayed regularly onto Burnett's land causing damage to crops and fencing. This allowed sheep from Mr Burnett's farm to stray onto Mr Johnson's land. Mr Johnson claimed that he had twice offered recompense rather than go to court, but his offers had been refused. Apparently the offers were not considered high enough to cover the loss of Burnett's 'mowing grass' and this had prompted his decision to go to court. Grass silage is usually produced by stock farmers two or three times a year, however it is the first cut of grass in late May that is the most important. Growth at this time of year is vigorous and the grass is rich in energy as it produces leaf rather than going to seed. Grass crops for silage are fertilised to increase production and can look very much like a conventional arable crop. As a stock breeder, this grass was a vital crop, needed to feed his animals throughout the winter, and trampled grass could not be harvested.

**MARRIAGE OF MISS M. BURNETT**

Mr. Paul Guest, the second son of Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Guest, of "Southernhay," Tutbury, was married to-day at St. Mary's Church, Chaddesden, to Miss Maisie Burnett, the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Burnett, of the Hall Farm, Chaddesden.

The bridegroom, who is assistant manager at Messrs. Webb and Corbett's Tutbury glass works, was formerly vice-captain of the Tutbury Hockey Club, and vice-chairman of the Tutbury Institute.

The ceremony was performed by the bridegroom's cousin, the Rev. W. E. Guest, of St. John the Baptist, Portland, and Mr. K. Kerry was the organist.

Mr. Burnett gave away his daughter, who wore a dress of ice-blue crepe, having a bolero jacket, both trimmed with rouleau. Her hair to match had a veil, and was trimmed with flowers in pastel shades. Mauve orchids composed her spray.

The bridesmaid was Miss Esme Margaret Bradley, the bride's cousin, who had a dress of apple green silk with pointed bolero, and straw hat to tone her spray was of Parma violets.

**GIFT FROM WORKPEOPLE**

Mr. Ralph Guest, the bridegroom's brother, was the best man, and the groomsmen were Mr. Bruce Guest (brother) and Mr. Bill Beeston.

Fifty guests were entertained at the Hall Farm.

The honeymoon will be spent motoring in the South of England.

A presentation of a canteen of cutlery was made on behalf of the workpeople at Tutbury glass works.

Mr. and Mrs. Guest's future home will be 6, High-street, Tutbury.

This was the first of many appearances in court for Mr Burnett. 1937, the Coronation year of King George VI, was a busy year for him and in May of that year he was a member of the planning committee for the 'Opening of the Coronation Shelter' in Chaddesden Park. Charles and Lilian Carlin were to present souvenir spoons to the children of the local Council School and a bonfire was to be lit in Chaddesden park. The King's Speech was to be relayed to the public outside the Memorial Hall. Although Mr Burnett was now farming Hall Farm, he was still involved with Racecourse Farm and stored stacks of hay in a Dutch barn there. In 1938 children 'playing with matches' in the barn set fire to the hay, 10 tons of which were owned by the Racecourse Committee along with that belonging to Mr Burnett. The roof was reported to be white hot at one stage and the firecrews had to stretch their hoses over half a mile to reach a hydrant on the Mansfield Road to prevent the fire from reaching the cattle sheds. Meanwhile John Burnett's son John Stanley had inherited his father's love of motor bikes, and regularly took part in many track days in Chaddesden and around the local area. Unfortunately he came unstuck one day in 1941 when he was caught speeding on London Road, Derby and was fined 30s. During WW2 Mr Burnett was involved in many decisions on the safety of Chaddesden villagers, including lighting, setting up of ARP posts, blast proof walls in houses etc. In 1941 he was told by the Derbyshire War Agricultural Committee that he must plough the 25 Acre Field, between West Road Spondon and Chaddesden, and plant it with corn. Spondon villagers were up in arms, as this had been a right of way for over a hundred years. It was pointed out that the path across the field was still usable and would be well sign-posted to prevent people wandering into the crops and damaging them. In October 1942 the War Agricultural Committee decided that a footpath and bridle path at Stoney Flatts belonging to F J Oldershaw should also be ploughed over and used for crops in spite of it being wet, stony and totally unsuitable. A member of the committee said that it was a pity the council had decided this without coming up with a usable alternative. In March 1943 he was elected onto Shardlow Rural District Council following the death of Mr H Garratt. Later in 1943 he again appeared in court, this time after serious damage was caused to the 4 acre field of wheat at Racecourse Farm by a large number of people using the field as a shortcut rather than using the footpath in the next field. He notified the police who kept watch on the field and caught 7 people walking across the wheat. All of them were fined 10s each plus damages. In July and August of that year he suffered badly from acts of vandalism to his crops and hay, both at Racecourse Farm and Hall Farm of which he was still owner. The vandalism spread across Chaddesden and apart from damaging crops, Chaddesden Park was also targeted. This included bottles and broken glass being thrown into the paddling pools in the Park, damage to gas lights and also damage to the veteran's shelter where every pane of glass had been smashed. It was suggested that the problems might have something to do with the fact that most of the boys' fathers were away fighting and the children had very little discipline in their lives. Things improved a little in 1944 when motor bike racing returned to Chaddesden after 5 years on a field belonging to Mr Burnett. The field was described as muddy and none too smooth, but 40 riders from the Pathfinders Motor-Cycle Club who had managed to get hold of alcohol fuel to run their machines, turned up on bikes ranging from Nortons to dirt track Ridges. The star of the day was Derby's own A G Briggs who won five of the races.

**CORONATION MEMORIAL AT CHADDESSEN PARK CEREMONY**

THE opening of a memorial shelter in Chaddesden Park marked the Coronation festivities at Chaddesden yesterday.

A sum of £5 had been allocated from the celebration fund, and an attractive and well-equipped building has been provided. The shelter is situated at a point which commands a fine view of the park and countryside.

Mr. W. H. B. Guy, chairman of the Parish Council, performing the opening ceremony, said that he felt the shelter made a fitting Coronation memorial. Mr. C. Mellor, the builder, had provided them with an excellent building, which was a credit to the parish. They congratulated him on his work and on the help he had given the Coronation Committee.

**FOY FOR THE ADULTS**

Mr. Guy pointed out that the shelter was for the use of adults, and that further provision would doubtless be made for the young people when a scheme for making full use of the park was proceeded with.

The shelter, he added, would be given over to the use of a number of parish officers who had the necessary time to perform the task.

Mr. W. Fraser, who said that he was one of the old villagers for whom the shelter was provided, expressed the appreciation of the parishioners for the gift of the Coronation Committee.

Those present at the ceremony included Mr. E. Lawley, secretary of the Coronation fund, and the following members of the Parish Council: Messrs. H. F. Leuty, E. Bennett, F. T. Hill, E. Martin, H. Cooper, H. Garratt, T. Poyser, J. W. Burnett, and Mrs. K. Evans.

**SPOONS AND PENNIES**

The Coronation Committee provided more than 1,800 souvenir spoons for presentation to the children of the village, and the distribution of Coronation pennies was also included in the programme.

The girls were made to the pupils of the Chaddesden Council School by Mr. and Mrs. C. Carlin. Mrs. Carlin performed the ceremony of unfurling a flag that she had presented to the school.

Another gift took the form of eight oak trees, which have been planted near the playground by the Coronation Committee.

Tea was served to the children at several centres in the village, and parishioners over 65 were entertained at the Memorial Hall. The Derby Tabernacle Band was in attendance.

A sports programme was postponed in view of the unfavourable weather, and the festivities concluded with a dance in the Memorial Hall.

On 24 March 1945, Mr Burnett put the contents of Racecourse Farm up for sale, including livestock, horses and crops and in April 1946 he also sold Hall Farm and all its contents. He then moved to Grove Farm in Lenton in Nottingham. Also known as 'The Prince of Wales Farm', this was allegedly bought by Edward, the Prince of Wales (who later became Edward VIII) to facilitate his affair with the married daughter of a Nottingham lace magnate. They had met whilst he was attending a Valentine's Ball in London, when outside, the air raid sirens sounded, warning of the danger of a German Zeppelin raid. Passing by, Freda Ward (nee Birkin) took shelter at the dance, and ended up dancing the night away with Prince Edward. This was to be the start of a 'romance' that lasted until about 1933. Although starting slowly the liaison gathered intensity and although known to officialdom the facts were kept from the public at large, but by 1927 the Prince bought a local farm - Grove Farm on the banks of the River Trent at Lenton - where his liaison continued, unbeknown to the public at large who had been informed that the Prince had purchased the farm to extend his agricultural base and to provide a base for his love of riding to hounds.



It is interesting to note that when purchasing the farm the Prince was accompanied by Charles Birkin, father of Freda who lived close by. It has not been established if the King knew of the events in Nottingham but it was reported that he had asked the Prince to give up his 'Nottingham pursuits' (publicly said to be hunting) and in return to use Fort Belvedere a residence within the grounds of Windsor Park. This he eventually did but his affair with Freda continued, she being responsible for much of the refurbishment at Fort Belvedere. The affair with Freda gradually waned. Freda of course, was only one of a number of ladies that the Prince 'spent time' with and eventually one - Mrs Wallace Simpson stole his heart, causing Edward to abdicate the crown. The farm at Lenton was sold in 1933 passing through the hands of George Shelton, John William Burnett and after his death, his wife Nellie, then to their son Colin Burnett and thus in 1960 to Nottingham University where it became part of their sports facilities. (Information extracted from the web site of John H Burnett) It is of interest to note that Freda Ward was none other than the niece of Lilian Carlin of Morley Road, Chaddesden. Freda was the daughter of Lilian's brother, Lieut. Sir Charles Lloyd Birkin. John William Burnett died in Lenton but is buried in Woodborough along with his parents, Arthur and Emily, his son John Stanley Burnett and his sister Kathleen. The records from the Woodborough Heritage are shown below.

BURNET John Stanley	84	2005 02 26	Consecrated	S1
BURNETT Arthur	53	1904 02 19	Consecrated	R/1
BURNETT Arthur R	2 days	1914 06 24	Consecrated	S/1
BURNETT Emily	76	1935 11 27	Consecrated	R2
BURNETT John William	65	1949 02 19	Consecrated	S/1
BURNETT Kathleen	24	1918 10 26	Consecrated	S/2

The final link between John W Burnett and Chaddesden was when his son John Stanley Burnett married Peggy Cleveley in 1950. Peggy was the daughter of John Cleveley and granddaughter of Sydney J Harris who lived in Highfield House, Chaddesden from 1927 to 1947. The photo on the left shows the family celebrating the marriage of Ethel Hallam and Charles Harris, the son of Sydney J Harris. They are the parents of Marie, one of the longest serving members of Chaddesden Historical Group. Third from the left on the middle row is his brother Reginald Harris who was a noted cricket player with Chaddesden Cricket Club.

**MARRIAGES**

**BURNETT-CLEVELEY** --- On November 18th 1950, at Lenton Parish Church, John Stanley, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Burnett, Grove Farm, Lenton, and Peggy Mary, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Cleveley, Chaddesden, Derby.



The final part of the story of Grove Farm is taken up by David Burnett. His father, John William Burnett, bought the farm in 1946. Unfortunately he died in 1949 which meant that David and his brother, Colin, both still in their teens, had to take over the farm. The brothers soon decided that their futures did not lie in Lenton and in due course they moved to farms elsewhere in Nottinghamshire. In 1960 Grove Farm was sold to the University of Nottingham who wanted the land for sports facilities.

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My thanks to Steve from 'The Telegraph Times' who supplied the photograph of J W Burnett. According to a family member, the photograph was taken on the day before his death. All newspaper articles are from the Derby Mercury. Wedding photograph courtesy of H M Garner.



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