

Montague Burton

Chevrons, fans and elephants

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September 29, 2024



Caveat

I have no credentials in architecture.

I have no credentials in the history of retail tailoring.

Overview

First Story

Second Story, 1885-1920

Second Story, 1920-1939

Second Story, 1939-2016

Second Story, Factories

Second Story, Philanthropy

Second Story, Part of the language

First Story, ... continued

The End

Aberystwyth



Aberystwyth



Guildford



Ashford



'Reason for listing:

A fine example of the Burton Art Deco house style on a prominent town-centre site. Burton's buildings made an important contribution to the development of commercial architecture in the inter-war period, and were significant exponents of the Art Deco style. This example is exceptionally intact.'

British Listed Buildings

<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/>

Overview

Montague Burton



Photo: Sigsworth

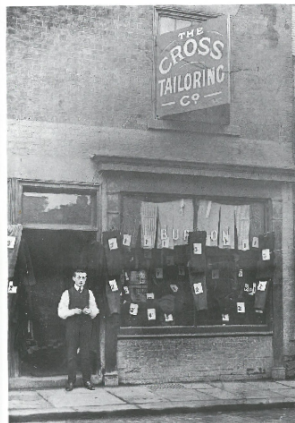
Montague Burton

1885-1952

- Born Meshe David Osinsky, Lithuania, 1885
- Emigrated with many, many others, 1900, via Hull to Leeds – with £100 (!!) in his pocket.
- Moved to Chesterfield and opened his first shop at 20 Holywell Cross, 1904.

Chesterfield

The first shop



1 Montague Barton outside his first shop in Fildeswell Street, Chesterfield, 1894.

Photo: Sigsworth
(Now a car-park!)

Growth

Pre 1920

- 1906: shops in Mansfield, Sheffield
- 1910: Operations move to Leeds
- 1914: 14 shops across north England
- WW-I: uniform contracts
- 1920: 60 shops
- Ready made → bespoke

Meanwhile

- 1909: Married Sophia Marks
- Four children are born by 1917

The Burton Family

Arnold, Barbara, Stanley, Raymond – 1919



Photo: 'Faded London'

Overview

Immense growth

1920-1939

The post war climate generated much demand that MB was well-placed to meet.

The firm expanded fabulously, with extraordinary business, marketing and branding acumen.

After 1920, policy changed from renting to property acquisition.

In 1921 the Hudson Road factory in Leeds was opened.

Montague Burton shops

Branding

'Every Montague Burton shop has the same outward appearance, both in its window dressing and in the name of the firm uniformly presented in bronze lettering on fine marble. The exterior stonework is always of emerald pearl granite, with shafts of Scotch grey granite. The interior fittings of oak and gunmetal, quiet and dignified are the same at every branch.'

MB, 1925, quoted in Sigsworth

Montague Burton shops

'From Penzance to Stornoway'

1919	40	1930	357
1920	60	1931	379
1921	96	1932	404
1922	140	1933	434
1923	168	1934	459
1924	191	1935	480
1925	211	1936	505
1926	224	1937	544
1927	254	1938	582
1928	291	1939	595
1929	333		

More than 2/month for 20 years. A huge number of these buildings remain.

Data: Sigsworth

Ashford





Image: Jeremai Smith

Brighton



Bristol



Image: Jeremai Smith

Burnley



Cheltenham



Image: Kenneth Allen

Guildford



Greenwich





Image: David Wright



Image: David Wright

Aberdeen – two!





Image: Geograph

Wolverhampton



Image: Wolverhampton History and Heritage

Abergavenny



Photos: shopfronteley

Aylesbury



Aylesbury

<https://www.aylesburyremembered.com/>



Burton Buildings

Location and accommodation

- Prominent, usually corner sites were carefully chosen.
- MB often travelled incognito to select sites.
- Upper floors were characteristically ballrooms or snooker/billiard halls – this attracted young men in an alcohol-free environment.
- Earlier shops were always in areas of dense population, but eventually 'The Tailor of Taste' was a landmark for almost all.

Burton Buildings

Design and appearance

- High quality, stylish exteriors were a specific part of the business plan.
- Interiors nurtured the atmosphere of a Gentleman's Club.
- Earlier shops were designed by the Leeds company of Harry Wilson. Burton soon absorbed the Wilson practice into the company.
- Art Deco was the mode of the period, and this is the High Street legacy Burton has left.

Opinions are divided between two main camps on definition. [It is agreed that] the Art Deco style replaced the standard revivalist Beaux-Arts grammar of ornament of bygone eras [but] there remains a lack of consensus on whether it was the highly colorful and playful geometric style which ruled the Paris Salons in the immediate post-WWI years – the chevrons, arcs, sunbursts, [etc.] – or that of the crisp angular patterns, most with American modernistic impulses, including zig-zag, jazz-age, machine-age, and streamlined aesthetics, to which architects were drawn towards 1930 and to which its supporters believe the Deco label most appropriately applies.

<http://artdeco.org>

Art Deco

Chevrons and fans



Art Deco

Tunbridge Wells, Erdington, Aberystwyth



Photos: Alamy, Tim Strang

Art Deco Elephants

Belfast, Chatham, Greenwich, Streatham



Photos: artdecobuildings, Christopher Tipping, thegreenwichphantom, whyilovestreatham

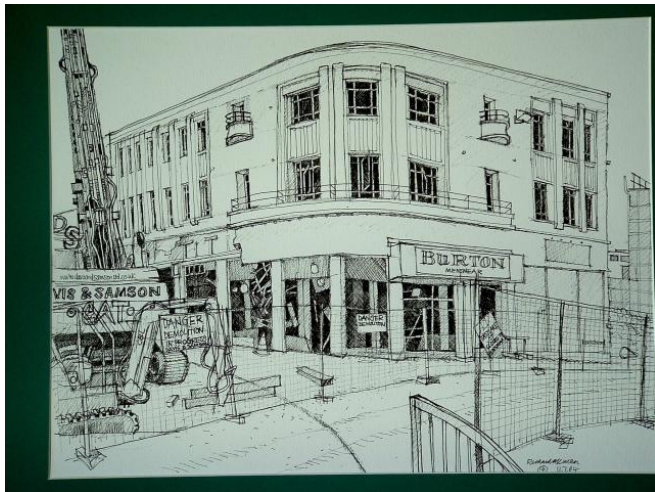
Post 1945

Exeter



Plymouth

Demolition, 2004



Drawing: Richard Allman

McDonald's opened its first restaurant in the UK on November 13, 1974. It was in Powis Street, Woolwich. The company wanted a West End site, but the only landlord who was selling properties was Burton's, the menswear chain, which was closing its shop in south east London. Which is why it ended up in this corner of the capital.

Daily Telegraph, 13 November 2014

Woolwich

How are the mighty fallen?



Photo: Google Streetview

Eltham

How are the mighty fallen? Coutauld would weep



Photo: Google Streetview

Ellesmere Port

The Montague Cafe



Photo: Google Streetview

Grays, Essex

1934,2016

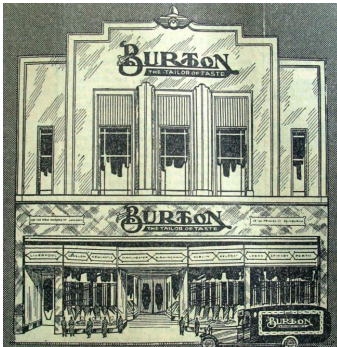


Photo: Thurrock Gazette, Google Streetview

'Most Scottish stores are listed; the Isle of Man building and Dublin and Waterford in the Republic of Ireland also have protected status. Only six stores in England and Wales are listed buildings – recent years have seen stores demolished in Plymouth and Neasden'.

wikipedia

Overview

Factories

Leeds, Hudson Street



Photo: Wikipedia

Factories

Leeds, Hudson Street

8 Aerial view of Hudson Road mills, 1950.

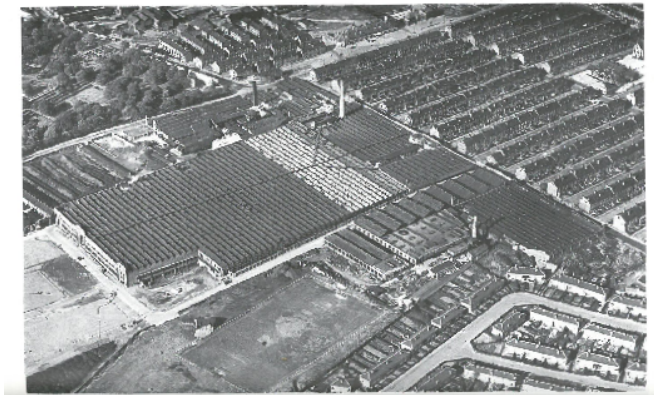


Photo: Sigsworth

Factories

Burtonville, Lancashire

6 Burtonville factory, East Lancashire Road, Worsley, Lancs., 1938.



Demolished 1970s.

Photo: Sigsworth

Factories

Goole: now 'Montague Mills'



Photo: Google Streetview

Overview

Factories

Dublin: never used!



Overview

Burton and his family were lavish with their wealth, using it for artistic, academic and political purposes.

Tailoring was still akin to a sweated trade when MB began.

He became the world's largest tailoring manufacturer: he took very good care of the workforce and was a popular employer, very free of industrial disputes.

- Canteen
- Social facilities
- Sports facilities
- Medical care, including dentistry and optical

'Mr Montague Burton makes it clear that, whilst he may do more for his employees than many others firms do, he secures a tangible return. Primarily instituted for the benefit of the workers, the admirable social movements fostered within the huge factory incidentally increase output. Humanising industry they also expedite it.'

Redmayne

Evidence suggests MB was a benevolent dictator who paid close attention to his enterprise.

He was knighted in 1931.

'Looking like a Burton's dummy'

Letter to the *Independent*, 8/4/1994

Sir:

Roy Hattersley's memories of Burton's emerge from a background of greater sensitivities than my own. While he recollects the phrase, *'looking as though he has just come out of a Burton's window'*, I remember the more direct expression as being *'looking like a Burton's dummy'*. This served the useful purpose of supplying a meaning that was considerably more pejorative than manikin.

'Going for a Burton'

Letter to the *Independent*, 11/4/1994

Sir:

During the last war, the initial Morse code instruction for wireless operator/air gunners took place at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool. The speed of reading had to increase at one word per minute per week. The test took place every seven days at a converted billiard hall above Burtons. Failure to pass meant immediate posting off the course. Many a man shed a tear even though an odd one or two tried to increase their ability with a double Scotch purchased out of the 30 shillings a fortnight pay.

It was nicknamed '*Going for a Burton*', a phrase which later was used on the squadrons when referring to the non-return of a crew from an 'Op'.

Blackpool



Photo: Google Streetview

'Going for a Burton'

This is disputed!

But the phrase is *almost* certainly RAF slang from WW-II, coming to mean 'not returning from a mission'.

'The Full Monty'

Possibly derived from the de-mob 3-piece.

But nobody is sure!

Overview

Burton Buildings

Finding them ...

Don't be surprised to learn there is a community of 'Burton spotters' out there.

flickr, *pinterest* etc. have a haphazard collection of very pretty photos.

Finding them ...

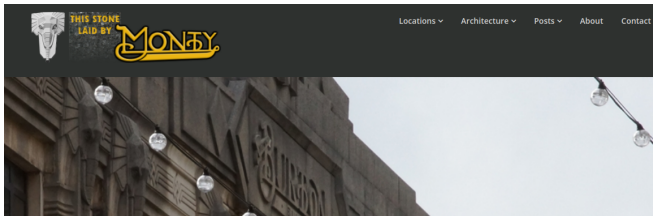
Google is a near-infinite resource!

- Trade directories
- Burton Store Locator
- 'Burton dance'
- 'Burton snooker'
- 'Burton billiards'

... and Serendipity!

Finding them ...

<https://laidbymonty.com/>



The architectural heritage of Montague Burton's Art Deco shops

These buildings, formerly branches of Burton the Tailors, are easy to spot throughout the UK & Ireland, although sometimes confused with a former Woolworths! Many locations have foundation stones laid by a Burton family member, which inspired the name of this site.

The stores were designed by Harry Wilson who was taken on as Burton's in-house architect around 1923, and Nathaniel Martin who replaced him as chief architect in 1937.

Use the menus above or the following links to see details and pictures of each individual location, or explore using the map below. Scroll down for the very latest updates on Twitter.

Finding them ...


<https://laidbymonty.com/>



 ***Surviving Burton features***

 ***Surviving Burton features, listed***

 ***Surviving foundation stones only***

 ***Surviving but altered***

 ***Surviving factory***

 ***Other surviving point of interest***

 ***Demolished Burton features***

 ***Demolished other point of interest***

'Memories of Hemel'

diane Says:

November 19th, 2015 at 12:16 am

hi , i also was from london, and we moved to hemel hempstaed when i was 11, i remeber burton dance studio,s up the old high street, and i was at the queens square when the queen opened it , i was in the girl guilds , when i get some more time i will put some photo,s for any one to view,
talk later di

<http://cyberelk.net/sue/>

Hemel Hempstead

High Street



Hemel Hempstead

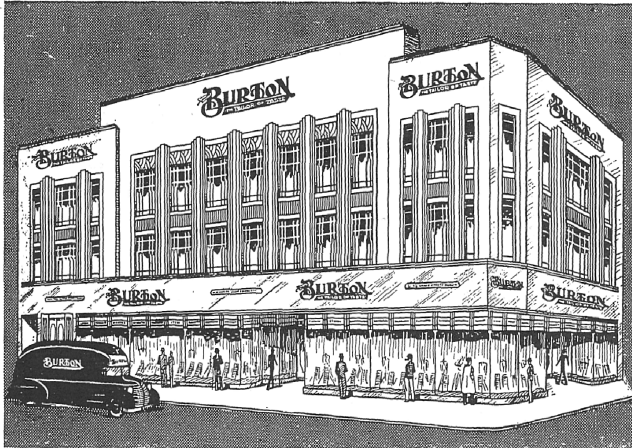
High Street



Aberystwyth



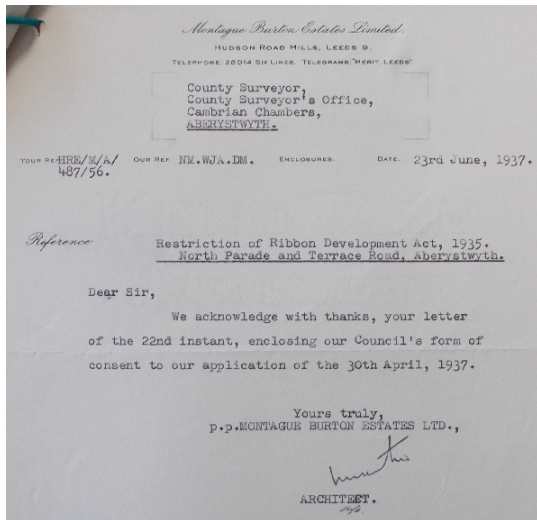
Aberystwyth



16-18a, NORTH PARADE, ABERYSTWYTH.

Drawing: Skinner

Aberystwyth



Courtesy of Ceredigion County Archive

London, (Man?)chester, Sheffield, Leicester, Newcastle, Leeds,
Blackpool, Portsmouth, Birmingham, **Dublin**, Bristol,
Southampton, **Edinburgh**, **Northampton**, Plymouth?, **Liverpool**,
Bournemouth, **Cardiff**, **Hull**, Derby, **Reading**, **Aberdeen**, Glasgow,
Norwich, Brighton, **Dundee**, Preston.



Courtesy of David Kirby

Altrincham



Photo: Google Streetview

Altrincham

Note the doors and window lights



Photo: Google Streetview

Diolch yn fawr

Oes unrhyw gwestiynau da chi?



Photo: British Listed Buildings

<https://www.rogerdboyle.net/Burtons/index.htm>