

# Montague Burton

Born 1885. Tailoring entrepreneur.

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*Compiled in 2021 by Alex Reid. Acknowledgement and thanks to the internet sources which have been archived.*

# 1. Montague Burton's Career

*This chapter and Chapter 3 were archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from the [www.buildingourpast.com](http://www.buildingourpast.com) website.*

INDIVIDUAL  TAILORING

*Filling the Gap between Price and Quality*

Correct  
to every man

- Suits /
- Patterns /
- Colors /
- Stitch /
- Tailoring /
- Price /



Before buying your suit or overcoat compare Montague Burton's with what is offered elsewhere at similar prices. You will see the difference in quality. I suggest Montague Burton's with what is offered elsewhere at similar prices and see the difference in price. You will be convinced that Montague Burton's is indeed all the way between price and quality. Not to it an overcoat. Montague Burton's has longer trousers and longer skirts. The standard of quality and fit is the highest. The standard of quality and fit is the highest. The standard of quality and fit is the highest. You will see the difference in quality. You will see the difference in quality. You will see the difference in quality.

**WINDMILL OVERCOAT**

4 guinea value

**45/-**

**MADE TO MEASURE SUIT**

4 guinea value

**45/-**

**LEWIS CLERK'S**

7 guinea value

**35/-**

4 guinea value Suit or Overcoat for, 45/-

**GUARANTEED.**

I hereby guarantee the work and service which, at every Montague Burton purchase. Any person proving accuracy of the Montague Burton tailors' makes his own and ordinary wearing conditions will be replaced if worn within six months from date of sale.

Signed: *Montague Burton*

**THE MONTAGUE BURTON SYSTEM.**

Montague Burton's great success is due to the application of the Montague Burton System. Here it is:

1. The use of the best materials available.

2. The use of the best workmen available.

3. The use of the best methods available.

4. The use of the best machinery available.

5. The use of the best service available.

6. The use of the best prices available.

7. The use of the best quality available.

8. The use of the best style available.

9. The use of the best fit available.

10. The use of the best finish available.

11. The use of the best workmanship available.

12. The use of the best attention available.

13. The use of the best service available.

14. The use of the best quality available.

15. The use of the best style available.

16. The use of the best fit available.

17. The use of the best finish available.

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19. The use of the best attention available.

20. The use of the best service available.

1938 Montague Burton advertisement.

Montague Burton was not the first to establish a successful chain of tailor's shops throughout Britain: Joseph Hepworth and his son Norris had opened their first shops in 1884. Nevertheless, between the 1920s and the 1960s, Burton was the country's predominant high street tailor. The company manufactured made-to-measure suits at its factories in Leeds and Worsley, dealing directly with customers through its impressive shops.

In the 1920s and 1930s these ‘modern temples of commerce’ were built on a large scale in town and city centres, often with upper-floor billiard halls that attracted potential customers. When fashions changed and the demand for suits plummeted, Burton diversified into general outfitting. It is now one of several retail brands in Philip Green’s Arcadia Group, with around 400 UK outlets.

## 1900 to 1918

The founder of Burton, Meshe David Osinsky (1885-1952), emigrated in 1900 from the province of Kovno (within the Pale confining Russia’s Jewish population; modern Lithuania) to England where he initially took the name Morris, or Maurice, Burton. Although he claimed to have borrowed £100 from a relative to set himself up in business in 1900, Burton evidently started out as a pedlar. By 1904, however, he was running a small outfitter’s shop at 20 Holywell Street, Chesterfield. This was followed by additional shops in Chesterfield and Mansfield, selling ready-made clothing to working men.

Burton began to offer made-to-measure (‘wholesale bespoke’) suits in 1906, but contracted out their manufacture until he opened his own workshop two years later. This was reportedly located in part of ‘Progress Mills’ (known only on letterheads) before moving to Elmwood Mills in Leeds.

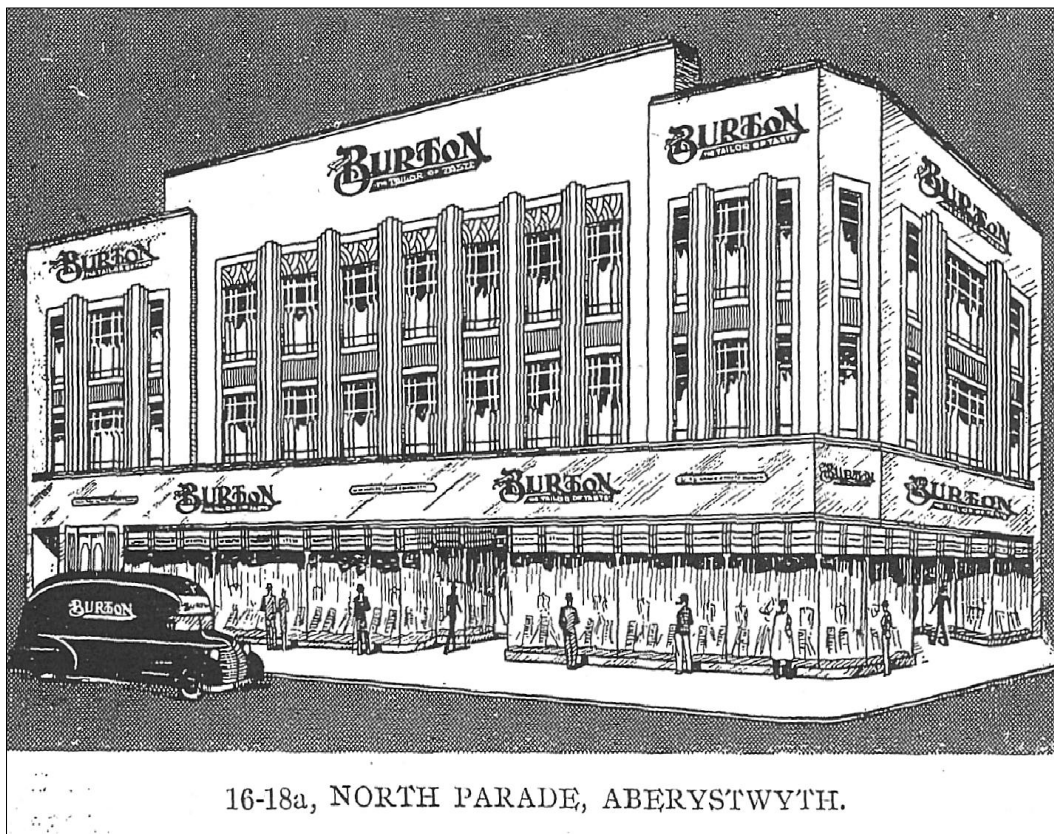
Following his marriage to Sophia Amelia (‘Cissie’) Marks in 1909, Burton took British citizenship and moved to Sheffield where he opened a ‘Burton & Burton’ store at 101-103 The Moor. The second ‘Burton’ was probably Burton’s brother Bernard, who remained a lifelong business associate. By 1914 Burton & Burton had 14 shops, mainly occupying leased premises on high streets throughout northern England and the Midlands (including Manchester, Leicester and Stockport).

Burton was excused military service during the Great War and in 1916 won a lucrative contract to manufacture uniforms. One year later, Burton & Burton was transformed into a limited liability company called Montague Burton, The Tailor of Taste Ltd. The man himself now assumed the name Montague Maurice Burton. By 1919 he had 36 shops, of which many (including Coventry, Dudley, Swansea and Wandsworth) had opened in the course of the war. Eight branches were in Ireland.

Burton’s shops enjoyed a symbiotic relationship with his factories. Customers would visit a shop, peruse catalogues, inspect fabrics, have their measurements taken, place their order and pay a deposit. Their suit was then manufactured (made to measure, to the customer’s specifications) in one of Burton’s factories. The main production facility from 1914 was Concord Street Mills, Leeds. With the pressure of war work, however,

Byron Street Mills was taken on in 1917 as an auxiliary clothing factory. Other facilities were located on Woodhouse Lane, Melbourne Street and Millroyd Street.

1918 to 1939



Growth did not stop with the Armistice. The demand for 'demob' suits enabled Burton to take over the vast Hudson Road Mills in Leeds from the wholesale clothiers Albrecht & Albrecht. These were said to be the largest works of their kind in the world, and were greatly expanded by Burton.

The first canteen at Hudson Road Mills, built in 1922, could accommodate 1,000 at a sitting. Its successor, which was completed in 1928, could seat 4,000 workers, but was itself superseded by a new canteen for 8,000 (by architect N. Martin), which was opened by Mary, the Princess Royal, in October 1934. By this time there were 10,000 employees at Hudson Road Mills. As well as its state-of-the-art catering facilities the factory had a medical clinic and rest rooms. Sports field and recreation grounds were provided in 1935.

Suits were despatched from this great factory to the branches by a fleet of 24 motor vans. The chain of shops expanded rapidly. There were 36 in 1919 and 200 in 1923. When the company went public, with capital of £4 million in 1929, it had 364 sites (197 freeholds) and 293 shops. By 1932 there were 380 shops, and by 1939, 595. From the early 1920s these premises were purpose-built by the company, on an enormous scale.



*The model factory at Worsley, Near Manchester.*

## 1945 to 1952

In 1937 Burton's architect, Nathaniel Martin, collaborated with the architects Wallis Gilbert & Partners on a subsidiary clothing works on the Great Lancashire Road at Worsley, near Manchester (*The Builder*, 10 March 1939, 478). Conceived as a Garden Factory and built in a modern style, this was dubbed 'Burtonville Clothing Works'. It opened in October 1938 – the year Burton decided to open ready-to-wear departments in all branches – but soon had to be supplemented by Halliwell Road Mills in Bolton, which was acquired in 1939.

Within months the country was once more at war – and Burton once again switched its resources to military clothing.

Burton bought a lot of property cheaply during the Second World War, and so by 1945 the company owned 130 key high street sites which it was not using. Many of these properties never became shops. Throughout the 1940s it was difficult for Burton to fulfil orders due to shortages of cloth and other materials. Expansion of the retail chain was arrested – indeed, replacing war damaged shops was a priority until 1950 – but in 1947 the bomb-damaged Peter Robinson store at Oxford Circus in London, was acquired. This was developed into a women's fashion chain with branches in Brighton, Gloucester, Cheltenham and elsewhere.

Sir Montague Burton, who had been knighted in 1931, died in 1952, when there were 616 Burton branches. In 1953 the firm merged with Jackson the Tailor. Lionel and Sidney Jacobson (sons of the founder of Jacksons) took over the management of the company and refurbished the shops, starting with the Newcastle branch. The Hudson Road factory had a staff of just 5,000 in the late 1950s: half of the number employed there in 1939.

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## 2. Philanthropy and Writing

Montague Burton was a benevolent employer, and took a keen interest in the wider issue of industrial relations.

Burton endowed chairs in industrial relations in the University of Leeds and Cardiff in 1929 and Cambridge in 1930. He also endowed chairs of international relations in Jerusalem (1929), and at Oxford University (1930), the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) (1936) and The University of Edinburgh (1948). He is commemorated in the Montague Burton Residences, which are student flats at the University of Leeds.



*The Montague Burton Residences, University of Leeds.*

Burton published in 1943 a book on industrial relations: *The Middle Path – Talks on Collective Security, Arbitration and other aspects of International & Industrial Relations*. It was published by Petty & Sons. He also wrote the foreword to the seminal work on the business successes of the Quakers: *Quakers in commerce: A record of business achievement* (1940) by Paul H Emden.

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### 3. The Architecture of Montague Burton

Montague Burton began to build new shops – ‘modern temples of commerce’ – around 1923, when he had amassed around 200 branches. The next year the company opened in a wing of Woolworth’s new superstore in Liverpool where Burton’s architect, Harry Wilson, worked alongside Woolworth’s William Priddle.



*Hull, 1936*



*Liverpool (Church Street, 1924; from Ideals in Industry, 1936)*



Early drawings of Woolworth's Liverpool and London superstores, dated 1922-24, show that Woolworth intended to allocate space to billiard halls, but these never materialised. Instead, the idea of combining billiards and retailing was adopted by Burton.

At this time Burton's shops occupied a motley portfolio of leased buildings. They often had a striking appearance, with gigantic lettering plastered over their frontages – even screening upper-floor windows – with the invitation: 'Let Montague Burton the Tailor of Taste Dress You'. The shopfronts followed a template. Each had a arched fascia of green glass, edged with gold and filled with white lettering. Below this ornate transom lights, still in the Edwardian fashion, displayed the words 'Elegance', 'Taste', 'Economy' and 'Courtesy'. The entrance lobbies had mosaic floors.

More modern shopfront designs were adopted in the mid-1920s. At Liverpool (1924), Hammersmith, Bradford (1925) and other branches of this period the transom lights were rectangular, punctuated by garlands and containing the usual words: 'Courtesy', 'Taste', etc. By the end of the decade, however, this had been superseded by the Burton 'chain of merit' (see below).



*Nottingham (Beastmarket, 1924)*

The Nottingham branch (Beastmarket, 1924) is typical of the earliest purpose-built Burton stores, having strong neo-Classical features and paired pilasters. From 1927 until 1929, when Burton went public, the shops were purchased and held by Burton's property company, Key Estates Ltd. The estate agents Healey & Baker were employed to find suitable sites in

prominent locations, ideally occupying corners. Unsurprisingly, many pubs were acquired. Sites were inspected by Burton's Deputy Manager, Archibald W. Wansbrough (1880-1961), or by Montague Burton himself. Often the vendor was kept in the dark about Burton's interest – in case this inflated the price.



*Belfast, rebuilt after a fire in 1928.*

Harry Wilson had become the company architect by the early 1920s, and was responsible for developing Burton's house style. Montague Burton, however, maintained a close personal interest. The company's in-house Architects Department was set up around 1932 under Wilson.



*Douglas, Isle of Man (1929; Burmantofts white faience)*

He was followed as chief architect around 1937 by Nathaniel Martin, who was still in post in the early 1950s. The architects worked hand-in-hand

with Burton's Shopfitting and Building Departments, who coordinated the work of selected contractors. Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s they were kept phenomenally busy: by 1939 many of Burton's 595 stores were purpose-built.

Burton's buildings are instantly recognisable. However, they were not identical. It is sometimes said that Burton adopted four different designs: in fact the company's buildings were much more varied than that. Façades, for example, could be clad in a variety of materials, including Portland or 'Empire' stone, emerald pearl granite, white faience (glazed terracotta) or red brick. Sometimes locally quarried sandstone was used, for example in Carlisle and Dundee.

Architecturally, façades were conceived as giant elevations, of the type made popular by Selfridges on Oxford Street in London in the years before the Great War. An example is the six-storey flagship store on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and New Oxford Street in London (1930), which was advertised as 'the largest tailoring establishment in the world'.



*Corner of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road (1930).*

Set between the upper-floor pilasters of these stores were metal-framed windows with margin lights, and moulded metal spandrel panels which masked floor levels. The rendering was often classical – sometimes with strong Grecian overtones – but from the late 1920s this relatively 'correct' architectural approach was sidelined.



*Bournemouth.*

Burton became one of the most enthusiastic exponents of the art deco style on British high streets: the armature of the buildings remained similar, but pilasters were replaced by moulded or ornamented fins (for example at Bury St Edmunds in 1933), while capitals were superseded by geometric blocks, or even stylised elephant heads (for example at Weston-super-Mare in 1932). The repertoire of motifs was extensive.

In the late 1930s a number of buildings, especially in historic town centres such as Woking, York, Truro and Hitchin (1938), were designed with more conservative neo-Georgian fronts. These were usually faced in red brick, with pale ashlar dressings and Ionic pilasters. Regardless of style, parapets added height to Burton's buildings, but many of these were removed or rebuilt in later years because they became structurally unstable. Even if parapets survive, 'Burton' lettering has often 'gone for a Burton'.

Two types of shopfront were used by Burton through the 1930s. They had two principal features in common. First, emerald granite frames with date stones laid by members of the Burton family. Second, transom lights displaying the company 'chain of merit': naming towns which hosted important branches. One design involved elongated hexagons and the other chevrons: motifs which were repeated on the entrance doors. Examples of both designs have survived, together with some of Burton's lettered mosaic floors and entrance lobbies. Burton's principal shopfitters were John Curtis Shopfitters of Leeds and the Cheltenham Shopfitting Co.

Despite the imposing size of Burton's buildings, only a small area was needed for each shop. An entrance screen of timber and glass gave a club-like sense of privacy. Inside was an uncluttered, masculine space. The floor was of oak block and the walls were lined by wooden mantle cases for

hanging garments and fixtures for displaying rolls of cloth. Part of Burton's buildings often contained lock-up shops. These were on short leases so that Burton could repossess the space if needed, for example when ready-to-wear departments opened in the mid-to-late 1930s.



*Abergavenny (1937).*

Montague Burton liked the first floors of his buildings to be used as temperance billiard halls. The space was designed with this in mind. Six-inch concrete floors were covered in wood block, and independent access was provided to one side of Burton's shop. Some upper floors, for example in Nottingham, Hull and Stafford, were rented out as offices (often with 'Burton Buildings' or 'Burton Chambers' over the doorway and in the parapet). Others housed flats for Burton employees.

By 1937 Burton had six categories of building (A to F), the main variable being the number of storeys and the uses to which they were put.)

Lionel Jacobson, Montague Burton's successor, instituted a programme of refurbishment in 1953, and by 1956 half of the 635 shops had been modernised. It was at this time that high fascias of slatted timber or mosaic tiles were installed, and the inter-war transom lights with their 'chain of merit' were concealed or removed. The lettering on the new fascias simply read 'Burton tailoring'. Fortunately, this was all rather cosmetic, and did not involve wholesale replacement of the pre-war shopfronts.

Around 1960, when Burton was doing a roaring trade in Italian men's suits, some new stores were built in a blocky modern style. Asymmetrical

windows were deeply recessed, appearing dark in façades clad in white oblong tiles. Two stores were built on Briggate in Leeds in this style, one including an arcade.

Into the 1970s, shopfronts had pale grey granite stallrisers and pilasters and red Perspex letters illuminated in red neon. Many fascias were sprayed with a textured coating in the 1980s.

Burton's Architects Department (renamed the Design & Construction Department in 1971) closed in 1975 and it was an external design company that modernised the shops shortly thereafter. Many sites were disposed of by Montague Burton Property Investments Ltd (which had been set up in 1972). There is little to say about Burton's shops since the 1970s. The maroon-coloured fascia and gold lettering so familiar at the turn of the millennium has more recently given way to very plain squared letters (BURTON), either black on a white ground or vice versa.

### **Memory by Rob Goldie**

Very much enjoyed reading this article. My Father was a member of the Architects Department at Burtons in Leeds from the late 1950's until it closed in 1975. Apart from "refreshing" store fronts he was involved in all aspects of the internal refit and also the Burton Retreat, designed and built in York in the late 1960's. I discovered your piece as I was searching for pictures of "625" the Store I believe was opened on The Headrow in Leeds by Morecombe & Wise in 72.

### **Memory by Alan Germaine**

My father was employed as an electrician on the building of the Hudson Road factory in Leeds. He was then taken on as permanent staff when the factory opened, staying with them for over 40 years. He became deeply involved with the telephone systems, and indeed was a frequent visitor to Sir Montague's house in Harrogate to attend to their telephones. He also arranged the sound system for the annual Lorry Driver of the Year competition held in the grounds at Hudson Road.

As a boy he would take me around the factory on a Sunday when he was doing maintenance, during which I was tremendously impressed by the main electricity switch room which to me seemed like a 'cathedral' with its gleaming polished wooden floor and great black shiny panels holding all the control gear and meters etc. I think this reflected the opulence of the Burton shops.

He met my mother there when working on the roof of the sewing machine floor, he spotted her down through the glass roof.

## 4. Final Years

*Montague Burton's home for his final years was a large and remarkable modernist house called Charters, near Ascot in Berkshire. The following description was archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from the website of Country Life magazine. It was published on January 4th 2005. Sir Montague Burton died while speaking after a dinner in Leeds on 21 September 1952. The funeral was at the Harrogate Synagogue.*



*Charters soon after its construction in 1936.*



*Charters after its 2005 conversion into apartments.*

Art Deco, post-Modernist, Vogue Regency, totalitarian, avant-garde. However you describe it, Charters at Sunninghill, Berkshire, is an arresting building with a uniquely powerful aura. Yet, for the past 45 years or more, few have been aware of its existence.

Designed in 1936 for rich industrialist Frank Parkinson by H.G. Hammond, of Adie Button & Partners, and built, regardless of expense, by Higgs & Hill, Charters was the last major country house to be built in England before the Second World War. Structurally, the mansion, with its soaring rectangular windows, brick walls clad in gleaming Portland stone and double-height great hall, is unlike most other large 1930s houses, of which few were built in any case.

Technically, it was years ahead of its time, and the arsenal of sophisticated heating, ventilation and labour-saving systems housed in the basement are all still in perfect working order.

Mrs Parkinson, however, was less entranced by the ultra-modern, and insisted on having the interiors designed by her sister in a mix of traditional styles, Queen Anne, early-Georgian, or Louis XVI.

By the time it was completed in 1938, the house cost £155,000, the equivalent of more than £25 million at today's prices. Six years later, a series of articles in *Country Life* (November 24 and December 1/8, 1944) recommended the Charters mix of modern and traditional as a blueprint for future country-house living in a servantless post-war Britain. The vision was short-lived.

Parkinson's widow continued to entertain the great and the good at Charters following his death shortly after the war, and some poignant Pathé News footage shows the Duke and Duchess of Windsor standing on the steps of the house during their visit in May 1947.

Two years later, the estate was sold to Sir Montague Burton, 'The tailor of Taste', for £105,000. He died in 1952, and in 1954, Charters was sold at auction for £40,000. Refused planning consent for development, the new owner sold off much of the land until first Vickers in 1959, and then later De Beers, turned Charters and its 26 remaining acres into a top-secret research station, effectively wiping the property off the map of Berkshire.

Having bought Charters (now listed Grade II) quietly some three years ago, John Morris, the founder of Sabre Developments, has painstakingly negotiated the complex planning consents required to return the estate to residential use. Now, the first 10 of 39 sumptuous apartments are being offered through Savills (01344 295375), at prices which will range from £1m to £3m, with completion scheduled for 18 months time.



Work is already under way to create seven grand apartments in the main house, where the newly restored great hall will be a reception area for use by all the owners.

The original wood panelling, marble floors and intricate bronze balustrades have been preserved, and most of the apartments will retain their original Art Deco features, including, in one, the sumptuous marble bathroom designed for Mrs Parkinson. Throughout the building, Parkinson's incredibly efficient household systems will be upgraded to 21st-century specifications.

The office block built by Vickers in the footprint of the old west wing is being demolished and replaced by a new, 16-apartment building sympathetic in style to the original, but 'no mere pastiche', Mr Morris insists. He has even tracked down the original architect, now in his nineties, to discuss the concept. Hidden among Charters' magnificent trees, a second new building will house a further 16 two- and three-bedroom apartments. Nearby will stand the private spa, with its heated 50ft swimming pool, sauna, Turkish bath, gym and snooker room.

Curious passers-by may think of dropping by for a casual look at this monument to early-20th-century wealth and status. But they can think again. The entire security staff of the former research unit has been retained by Sabre Developments. Their job will be to ensure the privacy of the next generation to live at Charters.

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## 5. His Son Raymond

*This 2011 obituary by David Brewerton was archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from the website of the Guardian.*



*Montague Burton's son Raymond.*

Three factors influenced the long and successful life of Raymond Burton, the businessman and philanthropist, who has died aged 93. They were, first, his father Sir Montague Burton's eponymous clothing business, second, his deep affection for his native Yorkshire and third, his Jewish roots. Sir Montague had four children, a daughter, Barbara, then Stanley, and finally identical twins Raymond and Arnold. The boys were brought up in the business. As youngsters, they were often seen hurtling around their father's Leeds factory on their tricycles. By then, only two decades after it was founded in 1903 with a £100 loan, Burton's was making and selling thousands of men's suits each week.

Burton's success lay in mass producing made-to-measure suits, at a price the working man could afford. Burton was an enlightened employer, believing that success came from paying decent wages to employees. The factories had canteens, health and pensions schemes and even chiropodists and dentists.

The business flourished, and by 1925 was the largest chain of tailoring stores in the world. Montague, who had been born Meshe Osinsky and arrived in Britain as a 15-year-old refugee from Lithuania, was knighted in 1931 for "furthering industrial relations and world peace".

Raymond was sent to Clifton college and then on to Trinity College, Cambridge, and finally to Harvard to gain an MBA. The second world war

interrupted his fledgling business career. He was commissioned in Royal Artillery and served in India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Back home, the family business had turned to war work, making uniforms and later "demob suits", where it had one third of the total market.

Raymond, Arnold and Stanley joined the board after the war, Raymond being given responsibility for the property portfolio. Already vast, by the time of Sir Montague's death in 1952 the group had 616 stores and 14 factories. Although the three brothers were central to the business, they felt that to provide for future management the company should acquire Jackson the Tailor, a smaller company. Lionel Jacobson, Jackson's chairman and also a self-made Jewish immigrant, became Burton's chairman.

Raymond moved to London to chair Peter Robinson, the women's fashion chain that Burton's acquired in 1946. He was also deputy chair of the parent company. During his time at Peter Robinson, Raymond set up the first Top Shop, in the basement of Peter Robinson at Oxford Circus, to attack the young fashion market.



Meanwhile, he was developing his lifelong philanthropic interests, and cementing his cultural roots in Yorkshire. He had married Pamela Flatau in 1946 (Arnold married her sister Barbara) and bought a Georgian gothic pile, Whitwell Hall, with 25 acres, in North Yorkshire. In the 1970s, Raymond's last decade on the Burton board, the business changed its name to the Burton Group, acquired other chains such as Evans and Dorothy Perkins and developed Top Shop and later Top Man as stand-alone retail chains. In 1977, Ralph Halpern became chief executive, and in 1997 it became Arcadia Group.

Arnold and Raymond enjoyed their wealth, indulging their passion for exotic motor cars. They were a moderately successful rally team, although in 1958 they were both injured when their car skidded over an embankment during an Alpine Rally. This did nothing to lessen Raymond's enthusiasm for cars, and in his 80s he was one of the first purchasers of the two-door Bentley GT. Raymond retired in 1981, to concentrate on his philanthropic activities, for which he was appointed CBE in 1995. He liked to back new ventures, rather than simply adding his name to organisations already enjoying success.



*Bentley 2-door GT, 2003.*

He was an active supporter of York University, where he built the Raymond Burton Library for Humanities Research, joking that he needed the library to house his own extensive collection of books, playbills and manuscripts relating to Yorkshire. It is said that he no sooner sent parts of his collection to the library than he acquired new assets, including a 1399 account roll of the Paternoster Guild, which had been missing since the 1880s. He also re-established in York another guild, the Merchants of the Staple.

An early advocate of environmental farming, he set up a model farm. He backed, among other causes, the Ryedale festival, the Laurence Sterne Trust, the Civic Trust and the Arboretum Trust at Castle Howard. He was a member of the £1,000-a-head Drogheda Circle, which financed new productions at the Royal Opera House.

His philanthropy was not confined to Yorkshire. In London, he was an involved and enthusiastic supporter and benefactor of the Jewish Museum,

where he was chair and later president. He purchased a Grade II listed building for the museum in the late 1980s, and in 2002 supported the purchase of an adjoining former piano factory. Last year, although his health was fading, he was able to witness the completion and opening of the new museum, of which he was immensely proud.



*The Jewish Museum, Camden, London.*

Pamela died in 2002. He is survived by his second wife, Diana, whom he had known since they were 17. He is also survived by his two daughters from his first marriage, Harriet and Jane, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

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## 6. Memories of Hudson Road

*Hudson Road, just off Harehills Lane in Burmantofts, Leeds, used to be home to the biggest clothing factory in the world, part of Sir Montague Burton's menswear empire. The following memories of those who worked there were archived in 2021, with acknowledgement and thanks, from the section of the BBC website dealing with the local history of Leeds.*



Around 10,000 people worked on the site, producing over 30,000 suits a week. Burton was the biggest employer in Leeds. Hudson Road was the heart of Montague Burton's empire. He chose Leeds because it was the centre of Britain's textile industry and so he had access to skilled tailors and machinists. Burton's secret was to offer high-quality made-to-measure suits at low prices. "A five guinea suit for 55 shillings", was Burton's promise.

Men would start work at 14 years of age as barrow boys, then be apprenticed as tailors or cutters. However, men were outnumbered 10 to one by women. There were vast workrooms of machinists, with whole families working on the same production line. The factory was described by former tailor, Sam Bernstein, as "a town in itself".

Burton made every effort to keep his staff happy - Hudson Road had the largest works canteen in the world, along with a pre-welfare state health and pension scheme. Free dentists, chiropodists and even sun-ray treatment were provided for factory staff.



*The canteen at the Montague Burton Hudson Road factory in Leeds.*

### **Memory by A.D.Mahoney**

My mother worked there in the forties and fifties . She made sure I didn't miss the Christmas party .A truly wonderful affair for all the children of the thousands of employees . Every child came away with a present and the party food and entertainment was simply magnificent .

### **Memory by Roy Clark**

I used to live in Compton Row which is a street off Hudson Rd, almost opposite the bottom entrance in Hudson Rd. I was born there in 1942 and lived there for 25 years. I can remember the thousands of people walking down the street arriving for work in the mornings in the opposite direction in the evenings. It was like crowds leaving a football match twice a day. If you were caught up in the crowds it was difficult to get through your garden gate, you could be swept past by the sheer volume of people. My mother worked at Burtons, first hand sewing buttons to the suits and then later as a Hoffman presser.

When she was a sewing buttons she was paid 'piece work' this I think is the more buttons she sewed the more she earned. So on a night at home she would round us up to thread the needles with cotton thread and bees wax the thread, these would then be carefully place in a shoe box which she would take with her, saving her time at work. I remember Burtons sports day when the kids would race in the egg and spoon, sack and three legged races. All good fun. I started work at 15 as an apprentice engineer servicing

time clocks and a few years later would service all the time clocks at Burtons, it would take four of us about a week to complete.

### **Memory by Bob Scaife.**

Any old Cutting Room guys from the 60/70s & 80s about? Do you have the same happy memories of the tea ladies coming around with tea cakes fat and bread and scones, we would all ask for the fat with the most colour which we called the mucky fat because it had the most taste to it. Also working Saturday morning then going into Leeds for lunch before going onto Elland road to watch Leeds Utd.

I grew up in Stoney Rock Leeds started pushing a trolley around in the Cutting Room 1st April 1964, had 18 of the happiest years of my life in the Hudson Rd Factory. I eventually moved to the USA to become a senior vice president in one of the largest Clothing Companies in the world but I will never forget my roots and the people who I was fortunate enough to share those happy, happy 18years with. Good luck to each and everyone of you. And thank you for those happy, happy years to all managers and staff and most of all the Burton Family.

### **Memory by Matthew Lusardi**

My Great Grandma had a sweet shop at the side of the Hudson Road 'Burtons' entrance. My mum worked at the sandwich shop opposite the sweet shop owned by my uncle. They would make hundreds of sandwiches a day for all the Burton's employees.

### **Memory by Derek Everett**

In the 1940s most of the Burtons in East London had snooker halls above them. After a V2 rocket partly destroyed the one at the top of Walthamstow High Street snooker tables hung half out of the remains for several years.

### **Memory by Tommy**

Nearly all the female members of my family worked at Burton's at Stoney Rock at one time or another. I used to meet my mam there sometimes in the early 1960's, and the sound of the footsteps and voices as everyone seemed to leave together was like being at a football match. I am sure that at the peak of Burton's success there was a workforce there of 16,000, when it was the largest Clothing factory in the World. I'm probably not alone in thinking that there should be statues to commemorate Burton's (and Marks & Spencers) contribution to Leeds.

### **Memory by Colleen**

I worked at Burtons in 1977 the year of the Queens Silver Jubilee and one of the ladies I worked with made me an Easter Bonnet type hat with the



words "Jubilee Chick" on it. I think she was called Margaret Slater. I have some lovely memories of learning to sew in the training room with Hazel and Carol. At their say so, you were off to the factory floor, this was a nerve wracking experience, you could not see to the other end of the factory, hundreds of sewing machines were humming away and the steam pressers were hissing away, belching out steam and the pressers were forever wiping their foreheads with a bit of old cloth.

Some people sung as they sewed and it wasn't long before everyone joined in. My stepfather, Frank Coultate, worked there for years, eventually it became a distribution warehouse and he worked there too. After he died there was a bench placed in the grounds in his memory, all arranged by his colleagues. My sister and I had a lovely day looking round the factory once more and we received a bouquet of flowers each from the management and staff. I will always remember Burtons.

### **Memory by Derek Clay**



*A Lotus Elan sports car.*

I worked as Auto-Electrician on the Lorry/Car Fleet for several years up to 1979/80. It was then managed by Raymond, Stanley & Arnold Burton. They all had private reg numbers on the many cars we worked on. Arnold had a collection of various fast cars including a Lotus Elan. I think Stanley collected clocks (or was it Raymond?). The canteen was enormous & we could buy a suit in there very cheap, at a little shop in one corner. Cutting through machine rooms to other depts was a noisy experience. The site had even its own nurse, joiners, electricians, plumbers etc. There were regular coach trips organised.