

ART. IX – *The Burton Family of Clockmakers.*

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I. Introduction

WHEN we first traced the marriage certificate of a great-grandmother, Emma Burton (1824-96), in South Shields and found that her father was William Burton, clockmaker, we little suspected that he was the fourth generation of a clockmaking family which originated in Skipton in the early eighteenth century. His father, also William Burton, was a “native of Kendal” according to the well-kept registers of St Hilda, South Shields c. 1800.

Notes on clockmakers by T. Cann Hughes¹ and C. L. Reid² have referred to the wide geographical distribution of this family – “the Burton family were clockmakers at (Kendal and also) Whitehaven, Ulverston, Hawkshead and South Shields”. More recently, the comprehensive work of B. Loomes³ has given fuller details of the members of the Burton clan, and provided the vital clue that the family migrated from Skipton to Kendal, where they flourished from about 1730 to 1830.

However, none of these earlier publications appears to have been based on a general search of parish registers and other historical documents, so that some family relationships have been incorrectly deduced; this has meant that the dates of activity assumed for the various clockmakers have sometimes also been incorrect. This note presents the results of fairly extensive searches of parish registers and associated material in Westmorland, north-west Yorkshire and the Furness area of Lancashire. It makes no pretence to any expert knowledge of clocks and watches, for which the reader is referred to the excellent series on northern clockmakers by Mr B. Loomes.

II. Origins in Skipton

The parish registers of Skipton survive from around 1596 and were transcribed and printed in 1894.⁴ From these it is possible to find a George Burton baptized in 1665, son of Emanuel Burton (1628-69); George married Mary Stirk of Kildwick in 1690 and had eleven children, five boys and six girls. The boys were Emanuel, George, William, John and Thomas – two of these were to move to Kendal and found the clockmaking dynasty there and in Hawkshead.

George Burton (1665-1739) was a glazier, who featured occasionally in the Skipton Churchwardens' Accounts⁵ when he did some repairs in the church and was succeeded in this work by his son John (1711-54), who had an agreement with the Churchwardens (2 June 1745) “to keep the leads of the church and steeple in good repair and point them”. When George died in 1739, he left no will, and in this respect he was typical of the whole tribe of Burton clockmakers, for whom not a single will has been found! His widow Mary and his two sons, Emanuel and John applied for letters of administration and also delivered an inventory of his goods.⁶ Interestingly, these letters of administration show that Emanuel Burton also was a glazier and that he had moved to Kettlewell; in fact he was already in

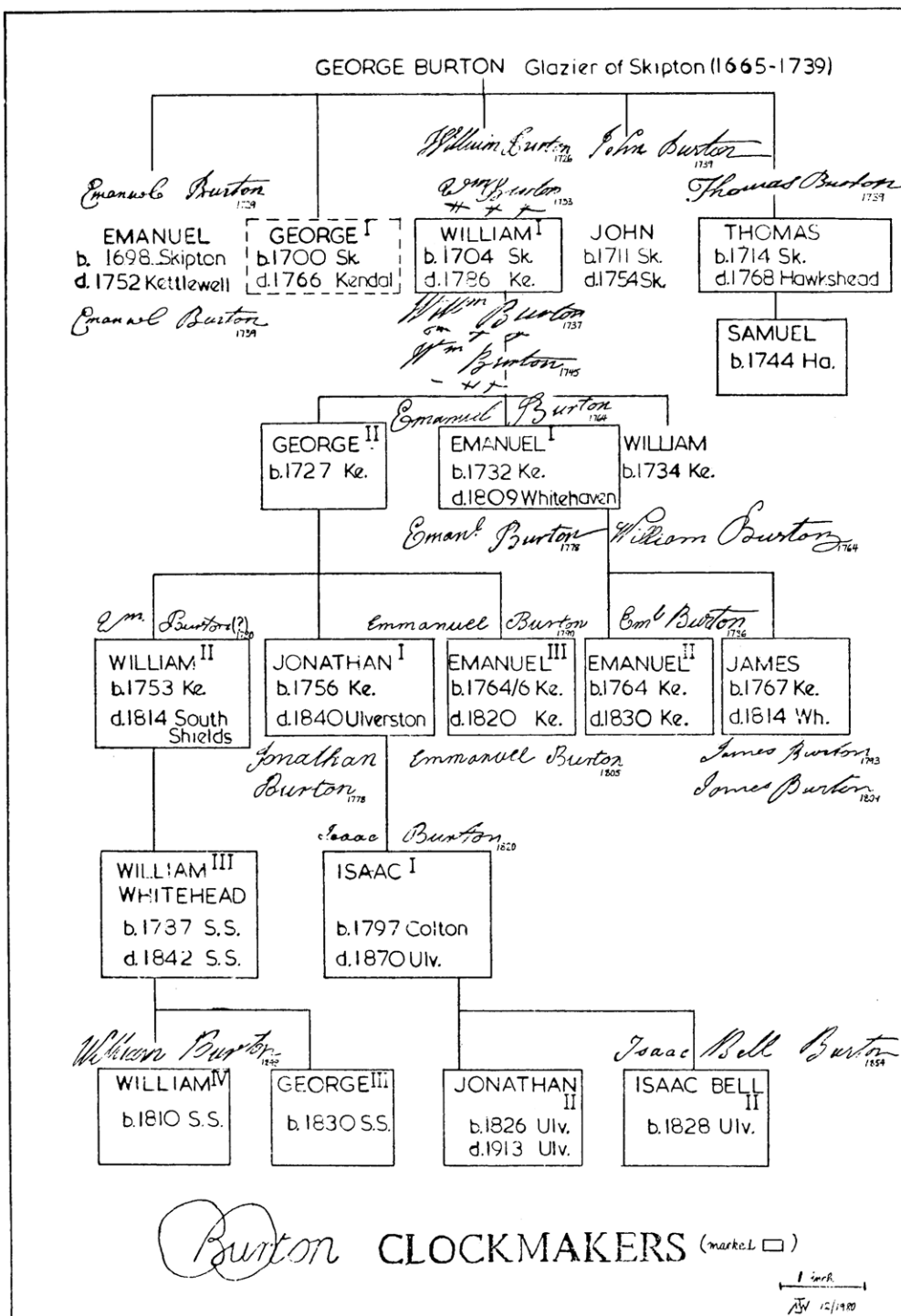


FIG. 1 – Family tree of Burton clockmakers in Skipton (Sk.), Kendal (Ke.), Hawkshead (Ha.), Whitehaven (Wh.), South Shields (S.S.), and Ulverston (Ulv.) with signatures from Lancaster Marriage Bonds, Marriage Registers and Administration Bonds.

Kettlewell in 1728/9 when he acted as bondsman for John Currey, Vicar of Kettlewell.⁷ (He was a "yeoman" at the earlier date, but had identical signatures in 1728/9 and 1739.) This is important, as it establishes that this particular Emanuel Burton did not migrate to Kendal with the three brothers George, William and Thomas.

Unfortunately, no trace has been found of any apprenticeship indentures in Skipton nor settlement certificates for George, William and Thomas in Kendal, but there is some direct evidence for their movement to Kendal:—

- (i) a Lancaster marriage bond dated 7 October 1739 exists for Thomas Burton to marry Agnes Mattson of Kendal, spinster, at Kirkby Lonsdale, Kendal or Helsington; Thomas Burton is described as being "of Skipton in the County of York, Clockmaker";⁸
- (ii) William Burton died in Kendal in January 1786, aged 81, which agrees precisely with the baptism of William Burton in Skipton in July 1704.

There is also strong circumstantial evidence in the fact that three brothers, George, William and Thomas "disappeared" from Skipton registers and "appeared" in Kendal registers at corresponding dates; moreover, family names were perpetuated, particularly George and Emanuel.

III. Burton Family in Kendal

George Burton (I) (1700-66)

There is no evidence at all that the oldest of the three brothers to move from Skipton was a clockmaker. He married Eliza Noble of Kendal there in 1730, and had two children Mary and Eliza in 1731 and 1733; he was living in Kirkland then and was still there, in Capper Lane, when his wife died in 1758 and he died in 1766. (Both daughters appear to have remained spinsters — Mary appealed successfully against paying Poor Rate in 1785⁹ and died in Capper Lane in 1797, while Eliza(beth) Burton of Kirkland died at 81 in 1814.)

William Burton (I) (1704-86) — Clockmaker

William Burton (of Kirkby Kendal) obtained a licence on 10 March 1726 to marry Jane Rigg and married her at Burneside Chapel the next day. Nine children were born during the next seventeen years, in Highgate until 1734 and in Fish Market from 1736 to 1744. William acted as a bondsman or witness for marriage licences in 1733, 1737 and 1745.¹⁰ When he was a bondsman, in 1733 and 1745, he was described as "Wm. Burton of Kendal, Clockmaker".

From Kendal Rate Books,¹¹ William Burton was in Stramongate Ward, which included Fish Market at the head of Finkle Street, until 1745. By 1748, however, he had returned to Highgate, where he appears to have stayed until his death at Allhallows Lane in 1786. His two sons, George and Emanuel, became clockmakers, but the evidence suggests that his son William became a hosier.¹² William Burton (I) maintained the Church clock at Kendal from 1778 to 1785, when the responsibility passed to his son Emanuel (I).¹⁶

Thomas Burton (1714-68) — Clockmaker

Thomas Burton was the youngest of the three brothers to come from Skipton to Kendal, and his stay there seems to have been only long enough to win Agnes Mattson and marry her at Helsington, as noted above. His bondsman was Peter Hathornthwaite of Kirkby Lonsdale, who was also a clockmaker. Thomas seems to have moved on immediately to Hawkshead, where six children were baptized between 1742 and 1756; his abode is given as Hawkshead or "Town", except in 1746, when he lived at Walkerground.

Agnes Mattson was the daughter of Samuel Mattson, whose will dated 1752 specifically mentioned Thomas and Agnes Burton. Samuel Mattson is also mentioned in Lancaster marriage bonds, in February 1738/9 when he was an innkeeper of Hawkshead and in June 1740 when he was yeoman of Hawkshead. It is interesting to note that the two oldest sons of Thomas and Agnes Burton were Samuel (b. 1744) and George (b. 1746), named after their parents' fathers. The fact that Samuel was the son of Thomas and not *vice versa* is important – the opposite assumption seems in fact to have been first made by H. S. Cowper in 1899¹³ and perpetuated by Reid & Loomes. Samuel Burton is listed by both authors as a clockmaker of Hawkshead, but very little evidence of his activity has been found.

His father Thomas was mentioned in the Hawkshead Churchwardens' Accounts quoted by Cowper and possibly a thorough search might reveal work by Samuel on the church clock.

		£	s	d
1745	To Tho ^s Burton for mending and dressing Clock	0	1	0
1746	To Thos ^s Burton for mending Clock and Hamer	0	1	10
1758	To Tho ^s Burton for mending Flaggan Lid	0	0	2

George Burton (II) (1727-?) – Clockmaker

George Burton (II) was born in Highgate in 1727, the first child of William (I) and Jane. He would move to Fish Market with his parents around 1735 and presumably learned the clockmaking trade there from his father. In 1745 he married Eliza(beth) Whitehead in Kendal, but it seems certain that she came from Orton. No Elizabeth Whitehead was baptized in Kendal at an appropriate date, whereas an Elizabeth Whitehead, daughter of Jonathan Whitehead of Fleakbridge and later Langdale in Orton, was baptized in Orton in 1723. George and Elizabeth Burton's first two sons were called William and Jonathan – moreover Jonathan Whitehead gave his granddaughter Mary Burton a guinea in his will of 1752.¹⁴

Their first child Mary was born in Fish Market in 1746 and the next three in Highgate between 1750 and 1756. Their next child, Elizabeth, was baptized in Orton in 1761, as George had moved to Tebay near his wife's birthplace. A settlement certificate¹⁵ states:–

Burgh of Kirkby in Kendall	}	To the Churchwardens and
in the County of Westmorland		Overseers of the Poor of the
Township of Tebay in the Parish of Orton		
and said County of Westmorland		

We the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the said Burgh of Kirkby in Kendall Do hereby Certify that We Do own and acknowledge George Burton Clock maker – and Elizabeth his wife and their four Children _____ to wit Mary aged fourteen years and upwards Jane aged ten years and upwards William aged seven years and upwards and Jonathan aged four years and upwards to be inhabitants Legally Settled in our said Burgh of Kirkby in Kendall and We do hereby promise for ourselves and Successors to Receive them into our said Burgh whenever they shall become Chargeable In Witness whereof We the said Churchwardens & Overseers of the Poor have hereunto Set our hands and Seals the Sixteenth Day of July in the year of our Lord 1760.

Witness James Chambers
James Atkinson

Geo: Burrow	}	Church-
Rob ^t Dickinson		wardens
Will ^m Jopson	}	Overseers
William Wilkinson		of the Poor

(Countersigned also by two Justices of the Peace for Kendal – Fran: Drinkel Mayor and W^m Symson.)

However, no further children were baptized in Orton and the Tebay adventure appears to have ended by 1766, when George and Elizabeth Burton had returned to Kendal. A family gathering occurred in Kendal on 4 May for the baptisms of Emanuel, son of George and Elizabeth Burton of "Turnpike in Kendal Park", and Sally, daughter of his brother William. After this date, there are no further definite sightings of George Burton – however, his wife (widow?) Elizabeth appears to have reached a sad end in the Kendal Poorhouse, whence she was buried in 1813, aged 90.

George Burton (II)'s sons William (II), Jonathan (I) and Emanuel (III) all became clockmakers, but all moved from their birthplace of Kendal to practise their skills.

Emanuel Burton (I) (1732-1809) – Clockmaker

Emanuel Burton (I) was born in Highgate in 1732, the third son of William (I) and Jane. He married Deborah Lancaster in 1756 in Kendal and lived in Stricklandgate, where William and Joseph were born, until 1760. From 1761 to about 1766, the family lived in Fish Market in Stramongate Ward, for which Emanuel was Churchwarden in 1764 and 1765.¹⁶ Their next move was to Allhallows Lane in Highgate around 1767, where Emanuel's father still lived, and here they stayed until Deborah's death in 1805. Emanuel may have moved to live with his son James in Whitehaven, or possibly died on a visit, for he was buried there in November 1809.¹⁷ He was identified as a clockmaker on several occasions – when Churchwarden in Kendal in 1765, in the *Universal British Directory* of 1790 when Emanuel Burton senior and junior were recorded, and finally in the burial register of St. James's, Whitehaven.

Emanuel Burton (II) (1764-1830) – Clockmaker

Emanuel (II) was born in Fish Market in 1764, the third son of Emanuel (I), but the oldest to survive to maturity. He must surely have learned the trade of clockmaking from his father and grandfather in Allhallows Lane, where the family had moved about 1767. He married Margaret Newby in 1786 and their first child, Emanuel, was born in Finkle Street the next year. In 1789, Emanuel (II) bought two front burgage houses on the south side of Finkle Street for £280 from Eleanor Bell;¹⁸ from Land Tax records and Jury Books it is found that he remained in Finkle Street for the remainder of his days. He is variously described as clockmaker or watchmaker and must have been active as both; when he was buried, aged 65, on 18 February 1830, he was "Clock and Watch Maker and Burgess of Kendal".

The *Westmorland Gazette* of 20 February 1830 recorded that he was a "respected townsman and deservedly esteemed as an upright character". With his passing, it would seem that 100 years of Burton clockmaking in Kendal had ended. His son, Emanuel, did not follow him but purchased a commission in the Army.¹⁹ Emanuel (II)'s cousins and their children however were to continue the tradition of clockmaking in many places in the North of England.

IV. Burton Family outside Kendal

James Burton (1767-1815) – Watchmaker

Emanuel (I)'s youngest son was James, born in Allhallows Lane in 1767. Like his brother Emanuel (II) he presumably learned his trade from his father and grandfather, but perhaps decided early that there were too many Burton clockmakers in Kendal. A recent book on the clockmakers of Cumberland by Penfold²⁰ gives full details of his working life in

Whitehaven. He moved there about 1790 (when he was listed in the *Universal British Directory*) and advertised his King St. business in the *Cumberland Pacquet* in Nov. 1790. He married Jane Martindale in Liverpool in 1793, but she died only six months later. His second marriage to Mary Crenell of Whitehaven was in 1809 and their daughter Mary was baptized at St. James's, Whitehaven in 1812. In 1815 the *Cumberland Pacquet* carried the following notice on 17 January:

Death: Yesterday seennight in George St. in the 48th year of his age, Mr. James Burton, late watchmaker and jeweller at King St., greatly respected by all who knew him. The deceased was a member of the Volunteer Artillery Corps of this town almost from the first foundation and at the time of his death was Sergeant-Major of the Whitehaven Local Artillery.

William Burton (II) (1753-1814) – Clockmaker

William (II) was born in Highgate in 1753, the oldest son of George (II) and Elizabeth Whitehead. At some time between 1766 and 1781, he migrated to South Shields in County Durham, where three sons were born to William and Jane Burton – George in 1781, Thomas in 1784 and William Whitehead (III) in 1787. (He may be the William Burton who married Jane Sharp at St. Andrew's, Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1780.) In 1794 Jane Burton was buried at South Shields and William (II) married again about 1798/1800. His second wife was Rachael Eleanor and they had two daughters, Elizabeth and Jane, in 1801 and 1804; the registers recorded "William Burton, native of Kendal, Westmorland". William Burton, of Fairless Street, was buried in South Shields, aged 61, on 23 June 1814.

Jonathan Burton (I) (1756-1840) – Clockmaker

Jonathan (I) was born in Highgate in 1756, George (II)'s second son, and named after his grandfather Jonathan Whitehead of Orton (1692-1752). With his older brother, William (II), he would have learned his trade from his father. He too moved to Tebay in 1760 and back to Kendal around 1766 with the family. Jonathan stayed in Kendal a few years longer than William and married Agnes Bell of Kirkland in 1778; two children, Sarah and Elizabeth, were baptized from Kirkland in 1782 and 1783. By 1785, however, Jonathan and family had moved to Backbarrow, and five children were baptized at Colton church in the period up to 1797. Some time between 1797 and 1819 Jonathan's first wife died and he moved from Backbarrow to Ulverston, where he married a widow Mary Fell in July 1819. She died in 1826, but Jonathan lived on to the ripe old age of 84 and was buried at Ulverston in May 1840. (In August 1839 and April 1840, a Jonathan Burton was sponsor for the baptisms of Gardiner children at St Mary of Furness Catholic Church in Ulverston.)²¹

Emanuel Burton (III) (c. 1765-1820) – Clockmaker

Emanuel (III) is surprisingly classed among the migrants from Kendal, although he was in fact baptized and buried there, as he appears to have been active elsewhere. He was baptized in Kendal in 1766, the last child of George (II): however, he may have been born earlier and his baptism delayed until his parents' return from Orton to "Turnpike in Kendal Park". In 1790 Emanuel Burton of Cartmel, clockmaker, married Bella Topping of Colton at Colton. He appears to have joined his older brother Jonathan in Backbarrow, and children were baptized in Cartmel (Betty 1791, John 1796) and Colton (Phoebe 1792, George 1794). He next turned up in Staveley in 1804, when his wife Bella was buried, and

sadly his daughter Phoebe died there also in 1808. Emanuel was described as of "Crook Mill". He remarried in Staveley in April 1805, his new wife being Hannah Court and Emanuel described as a cotton spinner.

By 1810, however, he had moved south as Emanuel Burton of Burton, Clockmaker and Hannah his wife had a daughter Mary baptized at Thornton in Lonsdale. It is possible that financial disaster then struck Emanuel's family, to judge by three burials from Kendal Poorhouse:—

1813	24 January	Elizabeth Burton	age 90
1817	12 January	George Burton	age 22
1820	8 September	Emanuel Burton	age 56

The burial of an Elizabeth Burton (aged 90) fits well with the age of Emanuel's mother, who was baptized as Elizabeth Whitehead in Orton in 1723; similarly Emanuel's son George was baptized in 1794. Finally, Emanuel (III) himself was baptized in 1766 but was possibly born earlier, as explained above. (There seems to be little chance of confusing him with his cousin, Emanuel (II), who was baptized in 1764, and stayed in Finkle Street from 1789 to 1830. While Emanuel (III) died in the poorhouse, his cousin prospered as a Burgess of Kendal.)

Further activities in South Shields and Sunderland

William (II)'s third son, William Whitehead Burton (III) was baptized in South Shields in 1787. He followed his father as a clock- and watchmaker, probably first in Fairless St. and certainly later in Wapping St. (1841 Census). He married Eleanor Walker of South Shields at Jarrow in 1809, and seven children were born between 1810 and 1838. His life came to a tragic end, as reported in the *Newcastle Courant* on Friday, 17 June 1842:—

W^m Burton of South Shields, watchmaker, has been missing for about a month past, and on Tuesday the 14th instant, his body was found washed into Tynemouth Haven, and in a very mutilated state. How he came by his death is not known. The deceased was a man advanced in years, and has left a wife and family to lament his untimely end.

His sons William (born 1810) and George (born 1830) worked as clock and watchmakers; William (IV) was listed in directories in Wapping St. in 1844 and 1847, while George (III) gave his occupation as watchmaker, of Bridge St., Sunderland, when registering his mother's death from cholera in September 1849.

A recent book on the clockmakers of Northumberland and Durham²² refers to William (IV) being in Fore St., South Shields in 1841 and at 296 Back North Durham St., Sunderland in 1851, with George (III) also at the latter address. (Bates also lists a Thomas Burton in North Shields in 1810, when his son George was baptized; this Thomas Burton could well be the one baptized in South Shields in April 1784, an older brother of William (III).)

Further activities in Ulverston

Jonathan (I)'s youngest son, Isaac (I) born in 1797, continued the business in Ulverston. Isaac (I), a watchmaker, married Susannah Perkin in 1820 and six children were born to them between 1822 and 1836; there were three sons, Jonathan (II) (bapt. 1826), Isaac Bell (II) (bapt. 1828) and Thomas Perkin (bapt. 1831). Isaac (I) worked at Soutergate in 1829 and was also an engraver; he lived at The Gill, Ulverston and survived his wife Susannah by six years, dying in 1870 at the age of 73.

Jonathan (II) and Isaac (II) both carried on their father's trade, although Jonathan was usually listed in directories as a watchmaker and Isaac gave his profession as clockmaker when he remarried in 1854. Jonathan (II) appears in Ulverston directories as a watchmaker until at least 1886, working at 3 Queen Street, and living at 25 or 27 The Gill. By 1896, he had apparently retired and lived at Croft House, Church Walk until his death in 1913. His brother Isaac (II) did not appear in directories after 1876, when he (or his son) was described as "sewing machine agent and tobacconist" of 12 Queen St. And with that we must sadly record the end of nearly 100 years of Burton clockmakers living in Ulverston!

This account of the Burton families, based on registers and other documents, clearly leaves room for further work, since the Burtons were scattered over the Northern Counties. For example four of the sixteen known clock- and watchmakers have not been traced to their final resting places and apprenticeship indentures and wills* must surely exist for some of them. The writers would welcome additions – and of course corrections.

It is a pleasure to record our grateful thanks to the following and their staff for allowing us to quote from records they hold and for courteous assistance with our searches:–

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Mr D. J. Johnston	Director of Libraries	Borough of Sunderland
Mr R. M. Gard	County Archivist	Northumberland C.R.O., Newcastle-upon-Tyne

* Wills have now been found for Jonathan Burton (d. 1913) and Isaac Bell Burton (d. 1898), both of Ulverston.

References

- ¹ T. Cann Hughes, "Some Westmorland Clockmakers", CW2, xxxv 42, xxxvii 147, xxxix 171.
- ² C. L. Reid, "North Country Clockmakers of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries", AA4 (1925), 214-315.
- ³ B. Loomes, *Westmorland Clocks and Clockmakers* (1970), *Lancashire Clocks and Clockmakers* (1970), *Yorkshire Clockmakers* (1972).
- ⁴ W. J. Stavert, *Skipton Parish Registers* (1596-1812), (1894).
- ⁵ Skipton-in-Craven Churchwardens' Account Books (1728-1764), (PR/SKP(HT)3/3, North Yorks C.R.O., Northallerton; extracts in C.R.O. Journal No. 6).
- ⁶ Admon. and inventory for George Burton, glazier, Skipton, Craven Deanery (Apr. 1739), at Borthwick Institute, University of York.
- ⁷ Lancaster Marriage Bonds (1729-34), L.P.R.S., vol. 81.
- ⁸ Lancaster Marriage Bonds (1739-45), L.P.R.S., vol. 100.
- ⁹ Quarter Sessions, Kendal, Easter (1785), reference WQ/SR 459, Cumbria C.R.O., Kendal.
- ¹⁰ Lancaster Marriage Bonds, L.P.R.S., vols. 81, 83 and 100.
- ¹¹ Kendal Poor Rate Books and Assessments (1743-4, 1745-58, 1768-72) (ref. WC/W) Kendal Land Tax Assessments (1773, 1793, 1809) (ref. WQR/PLT), C.R.O. Kendal.
- ¹² Kendal Fell Trust, agreement with Churchwardens of Kendal, dated 22 Sept. 1764, includes signatures of William Burton, hosier and Emanuel Burton, clockmaker, Cumbria C.R.O., Kendal.
- ¹³ H. S. Cowper, *Hawkshead; its history, archaeology, industries, folklore, dialect etc.* (1899).
- ¹⁴ Will of Jonathan Whitehead, yeoman, Langdale in Orton, Westmorland (Apr. 1752), ref. P 1752, Cumbria C.R.O., Carlisle.
- ¹⁵ Settlement certificate for George Burton, clockmaker, and family (16 July 1760) in Orton Parish Records, ref. WPR/9/043, Cumbria C.R.O. Kendal.

- ¹⁶ Kendal Churchwardens' Accounts, ref. WPR/38, signatures of Churchwardens are on the Kendal Bishop's Transcripts, 1764 and 1765, Cumbria C.R.O., Kendal.
- ¹⁷ Holy Trinity, Whitehaven, Parish Register, ref. PR/84/3, Cumbria C.R.O. Carlisle.
- ¹⁸ Title deeds for two burgage messuages in Finkle Street, Kendal, ref. WD/MM Box 7, Cumbria C.R.O., Kendal.
- ¹⁹ Emanuel Burton, son of Emanuel (II) and Margaret Burton of Finkle Street, was born on 13 April 1787 and baptized at Kendal on 13 May. He purchased an ensigncy in the 44th Regiment for £400, on 17 August 1815, having served three years in the Westmorland Militia. He married in Drogheda, Ireland in August 1826 and retired on half-pay in September 1826 "on account of family considerations". By September 1847 his Return of Service from Wicklow sounded plaintive – he gave his age as 56 (not 60) and stated that he was "perfectly active and fit for service and free from all bodily and mental disability", but he had no employment. "I have in vain long sought it either Civil or Military having literally no means except my half-pay". His son, Emanuel Henry, was then aged seventeen years and had "just completed a liberal education, desirous of employment, but no present prospect". The Army Half-Pay returns show that he had emigrated to Brooklyn, New York by 1853, where he collected his 3/- per day until about 1865. Refs. WO 25/751, WO 25/809, PMG 4/224 at P.R.O. Kew.
- ²⁰ J. B. Penfold, *Clockmakers of Cumberland* (1977).
- ²¹ *Catholic Registers of St. Mary of Furness, Ulverston* (1812-1842), Catholic Record Society, vol. 20, pp. 26-7 (1916).
- ²² K. Bates, *Clockmakers of Northumberland and Durham*, Pendulum Publications, Rothbury, pp. 106 and 116 (1980). *Kendal in the nineteenth century*, a book of drawings by A. Wainwright, contains excellent maps of the areas of Kendal referred to.

The following parish records have been searched over relevant periods:

Kendal, Orton – Original Registers and Transcripts at C.R.O., Kendal.

Cartmel – B.T.s at Lancs. R.O., Preston.

Colton printed to 1812; 1813 on – B.T.s at Lancs. R.O., Preston.

Hawkshead printed to 1837.

Ulverston printed to 1812; 1813 on – O.R.s at Cumbria C.R.O., Barrow.

