

Pennyhooks Farm

A history by Neil B. Maw



The earliest documentary reference to the name Pennyhooks comes from a survey and enclosure of lands in Shrivenham dated 1658. This was brought about by John Wildman who had purchased several of the Shrivenham Manors including Beckett, the property of the bankrupted Henry Marten. The change of ownership in 1657 prompted a check on the validity of all copyholds and leaseholds and the court books of the Manors of Salop and Stallpits include long lists of evidence produced by tenants. The document referred to is a Decree from the Court of Chancery in London (SHS N825). It mentions lands such as Great Pennyhooks and Little Pennyhooks owned by the Lord, John Wildman, but it's not recorded who actually occupied and farmed the land.

The earliest reference to an occupier is within an Indenture dated 26th January 1715 (BCA D/Epb/E1). A Deed book belonging to Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell of Coleshill recorded him selling his ownership of the Tithes or Glebe that belonged to him, on numerous plots of land in the Manors that belonged to the Beckett Estate. It's not yet known how he became the owner of those complicated rights, but he sold them to Anthony Swymmer of Bristol who was described as a Trustee of John Shute, who would become the first Viscount Barrington

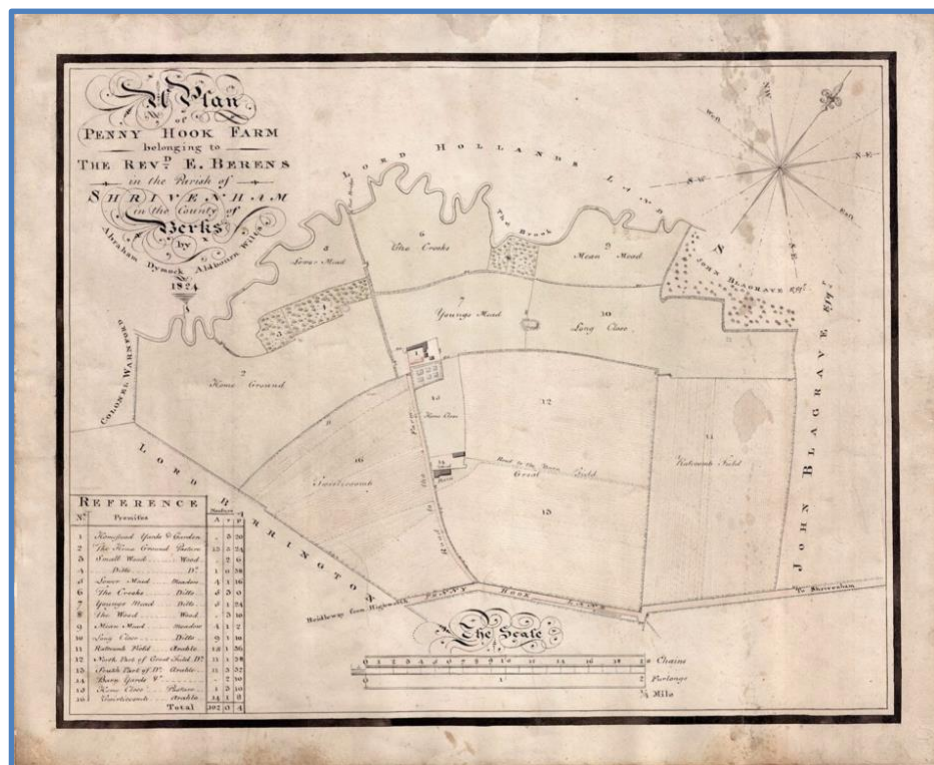
soon after. The Pennyhooks land is mentioned as part of the deal and the Indenture stated that the occupier was Thomas Watts.

From the records of the Overseers of the Poor comes the information that William Haines was at Pennyhooks in 1738, when he paid 6/6 (six shillings & six pence) to the collector. (SHS N562). It's not certain when he first took on the farm or how long he stayed, but the Overseer's accounts suggest that he was still there in 1750. The survey of the farms of the Barrington Estate commissioned by Lord Barrington (2nd) in 1771, included Pennyhooks Farm and the sketch of the farm below looks remarkably similar as to how it is today (BCA D/Ex 1424/1). But unfortunately, it doesn't include the name of the tenant, if there was one.



A report by the Charity Commission in 1909 provided the information as to how the farm was transferred from the Barrington Estate to the church (SHS N1249). 'A farm in Shrivenham called Pennyhook and Stonefield, was allotted to the vicar of Shrivenham in 1797, under the Longcott Inclosure Act.' The land called Stonefield lies next door to Pennyhooks but became part of Sandhill Farm at a later, unknown date. The vicar at the time was Rev. Barfoot Colton and he included in his Will dated 1803 the information that, 'in case my successor in the Vicarage shall make any demand for dilapidation of the Vicarage House or of the Farm House at Pennyhooks belonging to the Vicarage in which I have lately expended over £100.' (PROB 11/1402/345).

Rev. Edward Berens succeeded Barfoot Colton in 1803 as the Vicar of Shrivenham. We have learned much about him in recent studies and discovered that he came from a very successful family of merchants, was very wealthy himself and associated with highest classes of society. For instance, in 1805 he had the old Vicarage at Shrivenham demolished and a new one built, and the same year he married Lady Catherine Courtenay, daughter of the late Bishop of Exeter. It is no surprise therefore, to see the map of Pennyhooks Farm below, commissioned by him in 1824, and of the highest quality of the period (Photo courtesy of Lydia Otter).



Whereas it is known that the farm was owned from 1797 by the episcopal church and overseen by the incumbent of Shrivenham, it is not known who the tenants were until the Census of 1841, that showed John Akerman and his family in residence.

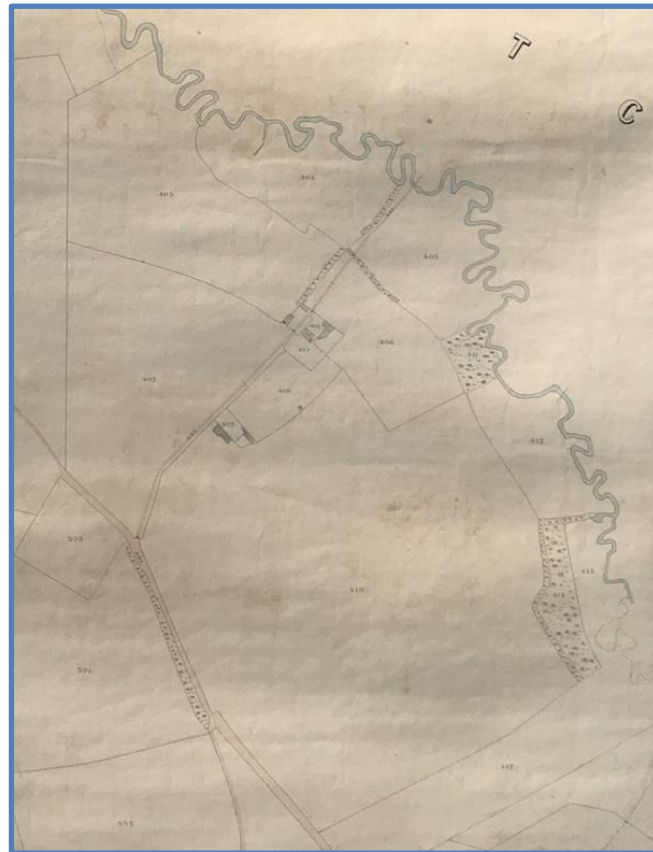
John Akerman in 1841					
1841 England, Wales & Scotland Census					
Penny Hooks, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire & Oxfordshire, England					
View original record Add to tree Print More actions					
Household members (6 people)					
First name(s)	Last name	Sex	Age	Birth year	Birth place
John	Akerman	Male	35	1806	Berkshire, England
Sarah	Akerman	Female	30	1811	Berkshire, England
Sidney	Akerman	Male	4	1837	-
Jane	Edwards	Female	10	1831	-
Sarah	Baldwin	Female	15	1826	-
Charles	Roby	Male	15	1826	Berkshire, England

However, a newspaper article printed the news that the unfortunate John Akerman of Pennyhooks Farm, Shrivenham, *'was on Saturday night returning home from Marston, in his horse and gig, his horse took fright and ran away, and coming in collision with something he met on the road, the shafts of the gig were broken, and Mr Akerman was thrown with great violence to the ground.'* (Wilts & Glos Standard 23rd January 1844). He was seriously injured but the article added that, *'he is under the skilful treatment of Mr Guy of Highworth, and in a fair way of recovery.* Further evidence from the newspapers suggested that John Akerman was a sub-tenant of the farm as the article below seemed to imply (Reading Mercury 3rd September 1853). The Census of 1851 listed that Thomas Sheppard aged 31 was the occupier of the farmhouse, but was described as an agricultural labourer, therefore likely to have been a sub-tenant of William Wilson also.

minations and parties, and it was earnestly desired that some of all parties would unite in conducting its operations and thereby work out the good intended.

SUDDEN DEATH AT SHRIVENHAM.—An awfully sudden death from apoplexy occurred at Shrivenham, on Thursday evening. Mr. William Wilson, who occupied Home-lease and Penny-hooks farms, in the above parish, for upwards of twenty years, had been in his usual health and spirits till within half an hour of his dropping from his saddle whilst speaking to one of his reapers on the Penny-hooks farm, never to speak again. He was, on falling from his horse, instantly raised by his labourers; and many of his friends were soon around him, but on his being conveyed to his residence at Home-lease farm, he died within two hours afterwards, without having shewn the least consciousness from the time of his falling, which occurred about 7 o'clock in the evening, after having, in his usual quiet and friendly manner, taken tea at his brother-in-law's, Mr. John Fairthorne, at Shrivenham.

The tenure of the farm seemed to have been kept within the same family of Wilson. The Barrington Estate map of 1865 (Below) clearly showed that it was still owned by the church and that the tenant was John Wilson.



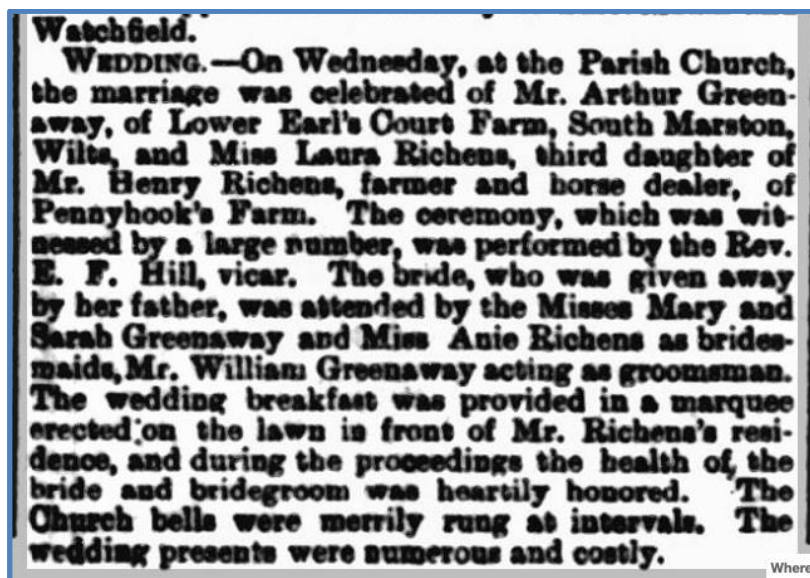
In the Tything of Shrotonham continued			
Brought forward			
Murray the Rev. G. W.	Wilson John	Twillycomb	420 402 ara
D.	D.	Green Twillycomb	421 403 pas
D.	D.	Cocks Mead	422 404 pas
D.	D.	Youngs Mead	423 405 pas
D.	D.	Home close	424 406 pas
D.	D.	Homestead & Gar den	425 407
D.	D.	Saddock R.	426 408 pas
D.	D.	Farm Buildings & Yard	427 409
D.	D.	Honey Ground Road	428 410 ara
D.	D.	and Long close	429 411 wood
D.	Wilson John	Penny Hook Close	430 412 pas
D.	D.	Mean Mead	431 413 wood
D.	D.	Hedgebank adjoining	432 414 wood
D.	D.	Nadcombe Copse.	433 415 wood

With John Wilson still as the principal tenant of the farm, the Census of 1861 listed that Richard Packer, aged 41 was occupier of Pennyhooks Farmhouse, along with his wife Sarah, aged 33 and their daughter Jane, aged 12. Richard was described as a '*Farm Bailiff*.'

The Census of 1871 showed Richard Packer still at Pennyhooks with his wife Sarah, but he is described as an '*Agricultural Labourer*.' Also listed at the same address is George Ovens, aged 23, with his wife Sarah, aged 22, and he is described as a '*Shepherd*.'

For some reason, the 1881 Census for Shrivenham didn't include the farm but curiously, there is an entry in the Watchfield Census that listed Jessie and Sarah Brown at Penny Hooks Cottage. It's not certain if this reference is one and the same as Pennyhooks Farmhouse, but it seems likely. A newspaper article gave the information that Henry Richens, a Farmer and Horse Dealer, was at Pennyhooks in 1884. Along with his son Albert, he had been brought before the Magistrates at Faringdon Court House, for alleged mistreatment of a horse. The hearing was adjourned to gather more evidence and the outcome seemed not to have been reported. (Berks Chronicle 6th September 1884). Three years later, another newspaper article reported that the Farmhouse had suffered a '*disastrous fire*, 'it was suggested by sparks from the chimney igniting the thatched roof. The article mentioned that the owner, Rev. G.W. Murray, and Henry Richens were both fully insured.

In 1890 a letter was printed in a local newspaper where Henry Richens defended the pedigree of one of his horses that had been put under question. At the end of his comprehensive explanation he wrote, '*In my opinion a better hackney stallion than mine does not exist*.' (Reading Mercury 3rd May 1890). The year 1890 was an eventful one for the Richens family. In the summer of that year, one of their daughters Florence, aged 14 died at the farm (NWH 25th July 1890). But happier news was reported later that year when another daughter, Laura, aged 20, married Arthur Greenaway of Lower Earls court Farm. See below.



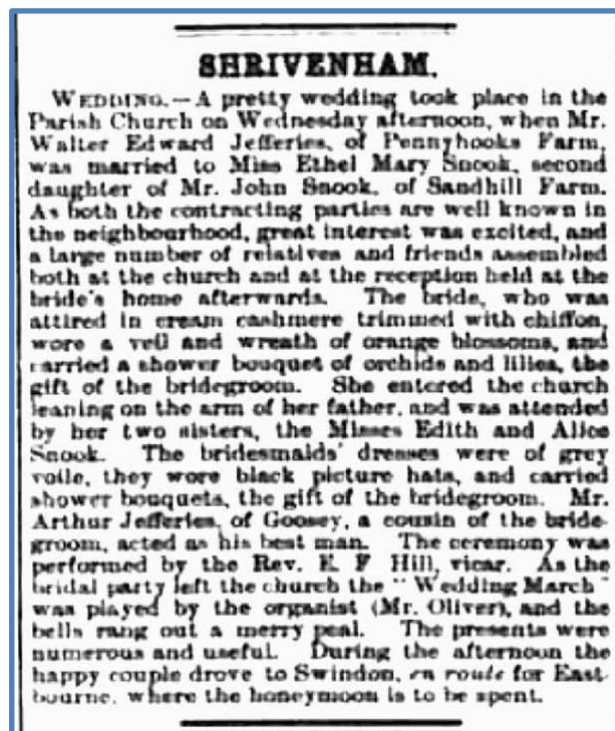
The following year, tragedy returned to the Richens family when another daughter died at the age of only 16. She was Annie the third of Henry's girls (Swindon Adver 5th March 1892). Towards the end of that year, Henry's wife, Jane also died at the age of 55. (Swindon Adver 3rd September 1892).

1893 was also a notable year but not directly for Pennyhooks Farm or the Richens family. It was the year of the terrible Watchfield murder when local man, John Carter, murdered his third wife Rhoda. The only connection with the farm was that James Carter, brother of John, lived and worked at Pennyhooks. James had met John in Pennyhooks Lane in July 1893, when John told him what he had done to Rhoda. James went to Watchfield to check out his brother's story and later returned to Pennyhooks Meadow with P.C. Sparkes, who promptly arrested John. The subsequent trial and further awful revelations ended with John Carter being executed at Reading Gaol on 5th December 1893. Before he went to the gallows, he admitted that he had also killed his second wife Elizabeth and explained where her body might be found at Broadleaze Farm, near Shrivenham.

In 1894, Henry's son Albert who was aged 22, was married at Shrivenham Church to Jane, the youngest daughter of the late William Dike of the Rose and Crown public house in

Ashbury (Swindon Adver 26th May 1894). The Richens were still at Pennyhooks in 1897 when Albert was fined for not displaying lights on his milk cart (Witney Gazette 25th December 1897).

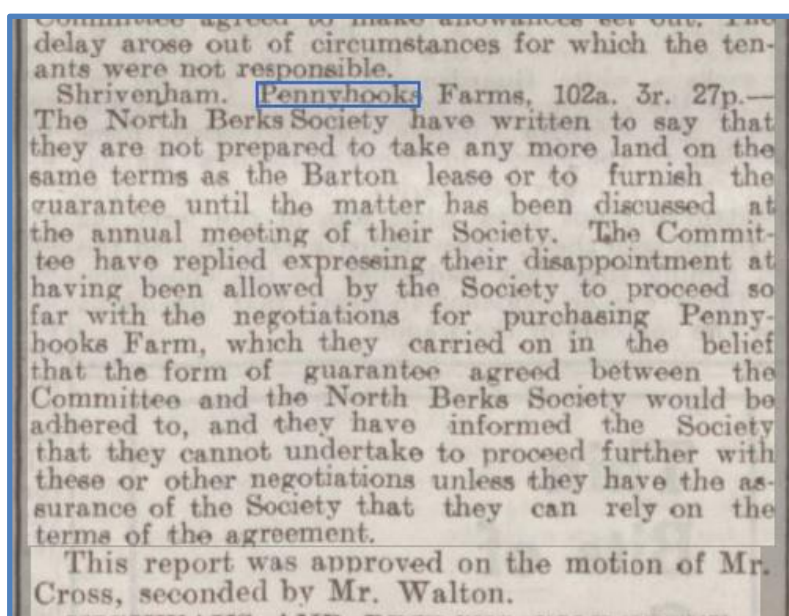
It was at some time close to this point in the farm's history that there was a change of tenancy and for some reason it wasn't included by name in the Census of 1901. The Census for Shrivenham recorded a Walter E. Jefferies at a 'Farm House,' which is unhelpful. However, two years earlier, a fire that broke out in Shrivenham High Street, was reported as being, '*spotted and the alarm raised by a Mr Jefferies of Pennyhooks*' (Faringdon Adver 5th August 1899). And to confirm this evidence further, there is the reporting of a, '*Pretty Wedding*' as below (Wilts & Glos Standard 30th July 1904).



Three years later, a newspaper reported the loss of Walter and Ethel's son, who was stillborn (Faringdon Adver 27th April 1907). But by the Census of 1911, they had a one-year-old daughter of the name of Gladys Mabel. The census also confirmed that they were still at Pennyhooks Farm.

As a result of the passing of The Small Holdings and Allotments Act of 1908, the subsequent Committee bearing the same name, were interested in purchasing Pennyhooks Farm. The

church administrators must have made the decision to sell the farm but we have no documentary evidence to confirm it. The general purpose of the act was to make land available to everyone and the North Berks Society likely had plans to let the farm to various tenants. One newspaper reported that, '*An offer had been made for the sale of Pennyhooks Farm, Shrivenham, 102a.3r.4p., but although the Land Steward reported favourably upon it, the committee, for various reasons, decided that they could not purchase it*' (NWH 14th May 1909). But at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 the farm was still not sold and negotiations between the Committee and the North Berks Society, seemed to have come to an end, see below. (Reading Mercury 1st August 1914).



Meanwhile, the tenancy of the farm seemed to have passed from Walter Jefferies to Percy Jasper Sutton and his wife Bertha. A newspaper article placed him as the farmer there in 1917 when he appeared in a court case concerning a person who stole his property (Faringdon Adver 21st July 1917). He was also fined the following year for driving a car without lights and from it we learn that he was 28 years of age and had recently left Pennyhooks and gone to Church Farm at Woodborough (Faringdon Adver 19th October 1918). The Electoral Register confirmed that Percy Sutton's last entry was in 1918. In the register for 1919 there was nobody registered to vote, but in 1920 and 1921, Henry John Hunt and Gertrude Ellen Hunt were listed as voters. The Hunts were to be the last ecclesiastical tenants of Pennyhooks Farm as Estate Agents, Hobbs & Chambers were instructed to sell it by public auction. The

advert below gave the information that the whole farm was being sold under the direction of Bucknill & Co, London, Solicitors, who were likely to be representing the church administrators, see below (Faringdon Adver 25th June 1921).

having thoroughly enjoyed the outing.

PROPERTY SALE.—At the Crown Hotel on Tuesday, Messrs A. F. Hobbs and Chambers (acting under instructions of Mr G. E. Bucknill) submitted to public auction the valuable freehold farm known as "Pennyhooks," situate within a mile of Shrivenham, and consisting of 103 acres of excellent land, together with a substantially constructed farm house and spacious barn, yards and buildings. Mr W. N. Chambers occupied the rostrum and having introduced the property bidding commenced at £2,000. Mr F. Embling of Great Shefford, Lambourn, ultimately becoming the owner at the round figure of £3,000. The solicitors concerned were Messrs. Bucknill and Co., London.

Later the same year another sale took place in order to sell the stock and the equipment and it's interesting to see, '*5 active and powerful cart horses*' (See below Faringdon Adver 3rd September 1921).

"Pennyhooks Farm," Shrivenham.
Berks

Sale of the whole of the excellent

LIVE AND DEAD FARMING STOCK,
comprising 5 active and powerful cart horses, 25 head of well-bred cattle, comprising in-calf cow, 24 promising 2-year-old stirk heifers, pedigree Berkshire sow, 13 store pigs, 40 head of poultry, 10 ducks, and the nearly-new collection of Agricultural Implements and Machinery which have mostly been purchased new since 1918, and which include ploughs by Ransome, harrows, Cambridge roll, horse hoe, 3 h.p. petrol and paraffin engine, combined power root pulper and cleaner and cutter by Bamford, power chaff cutter, mowing machine by Massey Harris, combined side-delivery rake and hay tedder by Bamford, binder by Harrison and McGregor, horse rake by Nicholson, carts and wagon, thill, trace and plough harness, which

A. F. HOBBS AND CHAMBERS
Having sold the Farm, are instructed by G. E. Bucknill, Esq., to sell by auction on the premises on Saturday, 24th September, 1921, commencing at 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

Catalogues may be obtained from the Auctioneers, Faringdon and Banbury.

The Electoral Register listed that Jessie Ethelbert Miller and Ethel Miller were resident at the farm in 1929 as well as the Emblings. But the registers also showed that the Millers had left by 1935. The Register of 1939 confirmed that the Emblings were still at the farm. Frank was then aged 60, his wife Alice was 59, and their son Francis was 25. Alice died in 1941 and was

buried at Shrivenham on 4th September. The Electoral Registers also showed that a Frank, Emily Ann and James Embling, were the occupiers of West Mill Farm – Frank junior and family perhaps? The Parish Register for Shrivenham listed that Frank Embling of Pennyhooks Farm, passed away in 1947 and was buried on 4th March, aged 68.

An advertisement in a newspaper in 1949 provided the information that Frank Embling had taken on a business partner and they were known as Messrs Telling and Embling. The Electoral register of 1948 listed Francis (Presumably the son) at Pennyhooks, along with Edgar A. Telling, Franks partner. But after 1949, his name disappeared from the register and only Francis was listed. This agrees with further evidence from the newspaper when an advertisement announced that a sale was due to take place on 6th October 1949 of live and dead farming stock (Glos Echo 26th August 1949). It is not certain if this event was the farm being cleared ready to be sold. The clip of the photo below shows Pennyhooks Farm in June 1946. (Courtesy English Heritage RAF Photography Ref 106G-UK-1561, Frame 3353).



Francis Embling, the son of Frank, continued to run the farm through until 1952. The Electoral Register for 1953 showed no listing for the farm at all but the following year's listing, with brothers Frank and Geoffrey, began the long occupation of the Otter family.