

The Notorious Second Richard Rigby

Richard was a prominent public figure and in turbulent political times rose to high office in Parliament. Besides trading in the East Indies he held lucrative government positions and took the opportunity to enrich himself despite being widely accused of corruption. He pursued his aim of creating an estate that would rank amongst the finest in Britain. He gained a reputation for the excellence of the Park and Gardens and especially for the lavishness of his entertaining and hospitality. However dubious his actions elsewhere his wealth was used to the great advantage of Mistley village and

He sailed a skiff single handedly from Mistley to London to win a bet.

He reputedly rescued the Duke of Bedford from ruffians at Lingfield races.

He accepted two challenges to fight duels but both opponents withdrew.

He was described as corpulent, coarse, rough, frank and overbearing.

He never married but had two daughters by women from Colchester and Ipswich. He set up a London actress in a tea shop in Walton on the Naze.

A mystery surrounded a young girl brought up at the Hall. She was assumed to be the child of an aristocratic father and an unsuitably low class mother. Neither parent was ever publically identified.

He entertained lavishly with guests including two Princes of Wales, three Prime Ministers, the writer Walpole and Garrick the actor. The Duke of Bridgewater came to advise on the Quay and the Adam brothers helped with his building projects.

He had income from interests in slave plantations in Antigua, Grenada and Jamaica. He traded in sugar, cocoa and coffee.

Edmund Burke sought his impeachment.

He did not use the Game Laws against poachers because the penalties were too

Recommended :- Mistley in the Days of the Rigbys written by Ivan Garwood (available at the Museum in the Library and elsewhere) and the DVD: Barley, Swans and Barges The Mistley Story

The Rigby Ramble



Mistley Hall

An easy walk of about 2 miles on roads, tracks and footpaths passing landmarks left by the Rigby Family.

The entrance and exit of Tunnel Meadow are often muddy and there may be cows in the fields. There is an alternative return route via Church Lane and the footpath from the Church to the Green

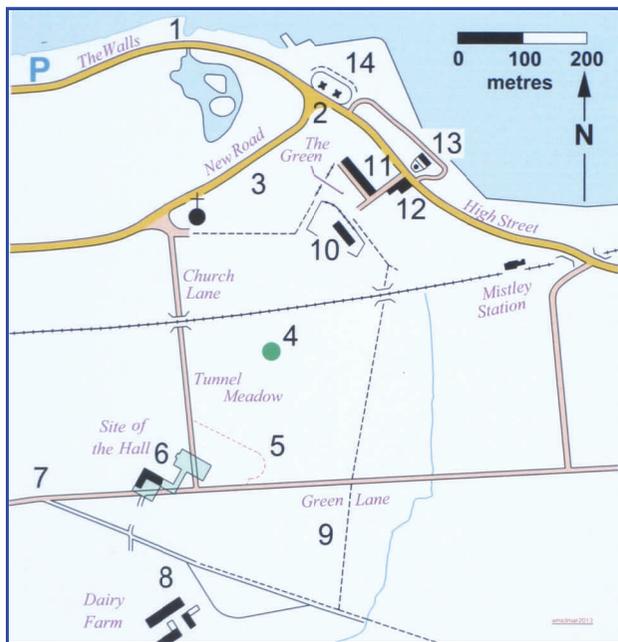
The Rigbys arrived by chance in 1705 when Edward inherited the neglected Mistley Estate. Before the end of the century they had transformed it into a flourishing Estate, village, port and quay.

Edward died two years after inheriting and Mistley passed to his son Richard.. When he died aged 46 his heir was his eight year old son, another Richard.

The Estate was then run by a Trust until Richard reached maturity.

When the second Richard died in 1788 the Estate was unable to meet its overstretched commitments and the largest part of it was ordered to be sold off.

The remaining Estate continued under Colonel Hale Rigby until his death in 1826. His



Park at **P** along The Walls. Grid Reference TM 113 320

Cross Hopping Bridge (1) and at the Twin Towers (2) turn right into New Road.

Pass (3) and reach a small car park by the church. Bear left and almost immediately turn right to take the broad track signposted Church Lane. After passing under the railway bridge the track runs beside Tunnel Meadow with (4) and (5) out to the left.

At the T junction with Green Lane turn right to pass (6) and in 140 metres turn sharp left at the footpath signpost (7). Continue ahead, past footpath signposts, to a gate opening onto a field. Carry straight ahead in the field on the footpath next to a fence with (8) out to the right. In 240 meters turn left by a gate in the fence onto a footpath and cross the field, passing (9). On reaching Green Lane cross straight over and enter Tunnel Meadow. Take the footpath straight ahead and pass under the railway. Soon after leaving the tunnel turn left at the footpath junction to pass (10) and reach the Green. Leave the Green passing (11) and (12) to reach the High Street and (13). Turn left along High Street and continue to the Twin Towers. Find the short footpath behind the Twin Towers at (14) and return to start.

- 1 Hopping Bridge** The initial brick bridge was built by the first Richard. The second Richard improved its appearance with a new parapet designed by the famous Adam brothers who were to help with many of his projects.
- 2 Twin Towers** The original church on this site was started by the first Richard but not completed until after his death. Some 40 years later the second Richard had it redesigned by Adam to improve his view from the Hall. The church was pulled down in 1870 but the twin towers that had been added during the Adam renovation were saved after protests.
- 3 Home Park** In Rigby's time this was meadowland with scattered trees sweeping down to give uninterrupted views over the Stour and into Suffolk.
- 4 Group of Trees** These surrounded a pretty spot which included an irregularly shaped pond with a small footbridge across its narrow end.
- 5 Kentish Fence (or ha-ha)** Undulations in Tunnel Meadow show the line of the Kentish Fence which wandered around the gardens.
- 6 Site of the Hall** New Mistley Hall was originally built by the first Richard on deciding to live in Mistley. It was extensively expanded and improved by the second Richard. It is probable that the Hall straddled what is now Church Lane until being demolished in 1845. What remains is the end of an extended group of buildings that were joined onto the Hall and included stables, laundry, servants quarters and other ancillary functions.
- 7 Green Lane** The second Richard had plans for a new approach to the Hall with a suitably grand entrance. All that was ever built were two lodges

where New Road now meets Long Road. Only one of these remains.

8 Dairy House Farm This existed before the Rigbys but was updated by the first Richard. A small herd provided dairy produce for the Hall.

9 Gardens and Estate The Estate was criss-crossed by paths protected by ancient rights and the gardens around the Hall were laid out within this network. The wider estate held a deer park and a patchwork of farms, woods and other properties which eventually stretched as far as the coast.

10 East Lodge Built by the second Richard as a residence and office for his steward. It was occupied by three generations of the respected Ambrose family who served the Estate for nearly 75 years.

11 The Green and High Street The twelve terraced houses along the north edge of the green and buildings along the High Street were of such a high standard for the time that many remain in demand.

12 Thorn Inn Built by the first Richard as a posting inn to aid the development of the village and port. It originally included the adjacent post office as the roofline indicates.

13 Swan Basin and Cottages Created by the second Richard to an Adam design in order to replace a messy area with a block of four attractive cottages and a striking fountain feature. A watering place for horses was retained by providing an overflow at the rear of the basin.

14 Footpath This short footpath is what is left from a roadway needed to allow access to the quay when the original church was built.