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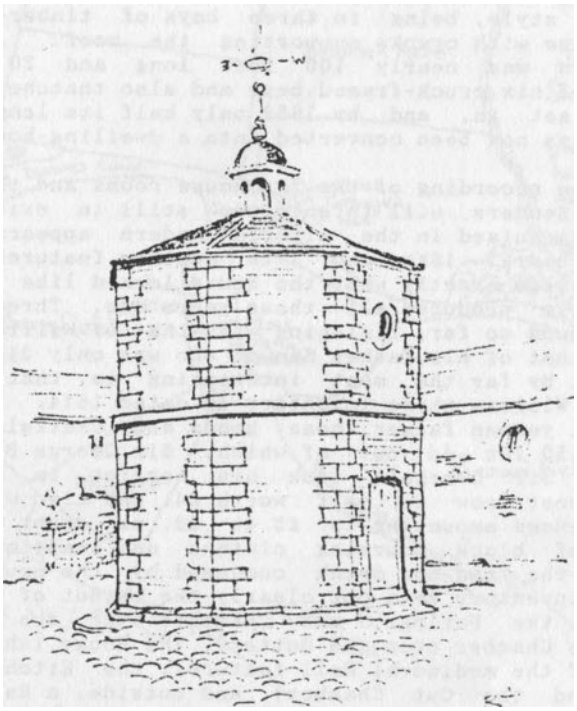

DUNHAM DOVECOT

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Bowdon in the 17th Century
Moss Farm by Peter Kemp

Moss Farm on South Downs Road opposite the end of Marlborough Road, is a building which dates from Tudor and Stuart times, as also does Moss Cottage opposite the Farm which started as two cottages in 1666. However, the Moss Farm building is much older with parts dating back to around 1500, and the yeoman farmer Sanders family were there from at least the time of the Armada 1588 until around the 1750s, when the Walker family took over occupation until well into the 19th century. Alice Walker's reminiscences, including the holiday visits of Mrs Gaskell, were published in 1987-8 in issues 9 to 12 of the Bowdon Sheaf, giving eye-witness accounts of farm life there in the 19th century.

A "Cheshire Life" article of 1959 shows the appearance of the farmhouse in 1949 and after its conversion to a dwelling-house in 1959. The original building we are told, was thatched, then partially roofed with corrugated iron in Alice Walker's time, and wholly slated from about 1900. The construction was typically Cheshire in style, being in three bays of timber-framing on a sandstone base with crucks supporting the roof. The original massive barn was nearly 100 feet long and 20 feet wide, consisting of six cruck-framed bays and also thatched until 1900; decay had set in, and by 1959 only half its length remained, which also has now been converted into a dwelling-house. From the recording of the farmhouse rooms and their contents in the few Sanders will inventories still in existence, it is clear that disguised in the altered modern appearance of Moss Farm are several 16th and 17th century features, and we can almost visualise exactly what the house looked like and what the Sanders family produced all those years ago.

Three inventories have been found so far, finishing with that of William Sanders of 1709, then that of his father Samuel who was only 31 when he died in 1665, but by far the most interesting is that of Samuel's grandfather William whose inventory is dated 1614. He was a well set up small yeoman farmer whose goods and chattels, etc., were valued at £50 10s 4d, out of which, Sir George Booth (usually called 'Old Sir George') took his herriot in the shapeof Sanders's best cow in calf worth £4, and also were taken the funeral expenses amounting to £3 4s. 0d, no doubt including the provision of black mourning clothes and trappings as was the custom, and the food and drink consumed by the mourners at the wake. The inventory sets out clearly the extent of the farmhouse premises - the Parlour, the Chamber over the Parlour,the Buttery, the Chamber over the Buttery, the House (which we see as a remnant of the mediaeval Hall feature), the Kitchen, the Cross Chamber, and the Out Chamber; and outside, a Barn and a Cart House.

This is the earliest mention of a kitchen in a Bowdon house found so far. Alice Walker, writing about the farm building as it was around 1885, some 270 or more years on, mentions one end of the farmhouse still being thatched; the house-place, which must have been the House of the 1614 inventory; the kitchen at one end and the parlour at the other; and the room over the parlour (where Mrs Gaskell slept) with its thatched eye-brow windows with lattices opening at floor level, which was the Chamber over the Parlour of 1614. the owl-loft in Alice Walker's time may correspond with the Cross Chamber loft of 1614 which contained '4 new lattezes for windows'.

The evidence of reconstruction with new lattice windows is also supported by the entry 'Bricks in the Cartehouse and without the house'. This is the earliest mention of bricks found in Bowdon, and they were probably used to build the house chimneys. By 1674 the farmhouse had 4 hearths, earlier having 1 less in the 1664 Hearth Tax Return, and earlier still, the 1614 inventory suggests only 2 hearths, one in the room called the House, and the other in the kitchen where an iron grate is recorded. The only existing example of a wholly brick-built building at this time is Sir George Booth's corn-mill at Dunham dated 1616 now restored by the National Trust as the working saw-mill which it had become at a much later date. It is possible that the bricks of the farmhouse and that mill, came from the same source locally. Dunham Mill is recognisable in Kip's 1697 engraving of the Tudor Dunham Hall, where incidentally, artists's licence has turned it round through 90 degrees. Although showing the scene at the very end of the 17th century, the foreground has three large barns in front of the Hall of timber-frame, but apparently not cruck construction nor thatched. The scene also shows a tumbrel drawn by two horses in tandem crossing the Park near all the deer, and felled timber being processed near the wooden deer-fence or pale which surrounded the Park until 1743 when the present brick walling was begun. This would seem to be one of the few pictures remaining from the 17th century showing timber-framed buildings in the vicinity of Bowdon.

Returning to Moss Farm, an interesting feature recorded in the inventory is the salt chest in the chimney of the House. This, of course, refers to the usual means of keeping salt dry in a box kept in a recess in the warmth of the chimney-breast, and the feature may still be there, perhaps hidden now. Reading the details of this splendid inventory, one can almost see the farmhouse interior just as it was in 1614 with the aromas of the kitchen mingling with the sweet smell of clean rushes strewn underfoot, while outside those of the farmyard mix with the pungent smell of peat-smoke which we can experience today only in a few places mainly in the Western Isles of Scotland.

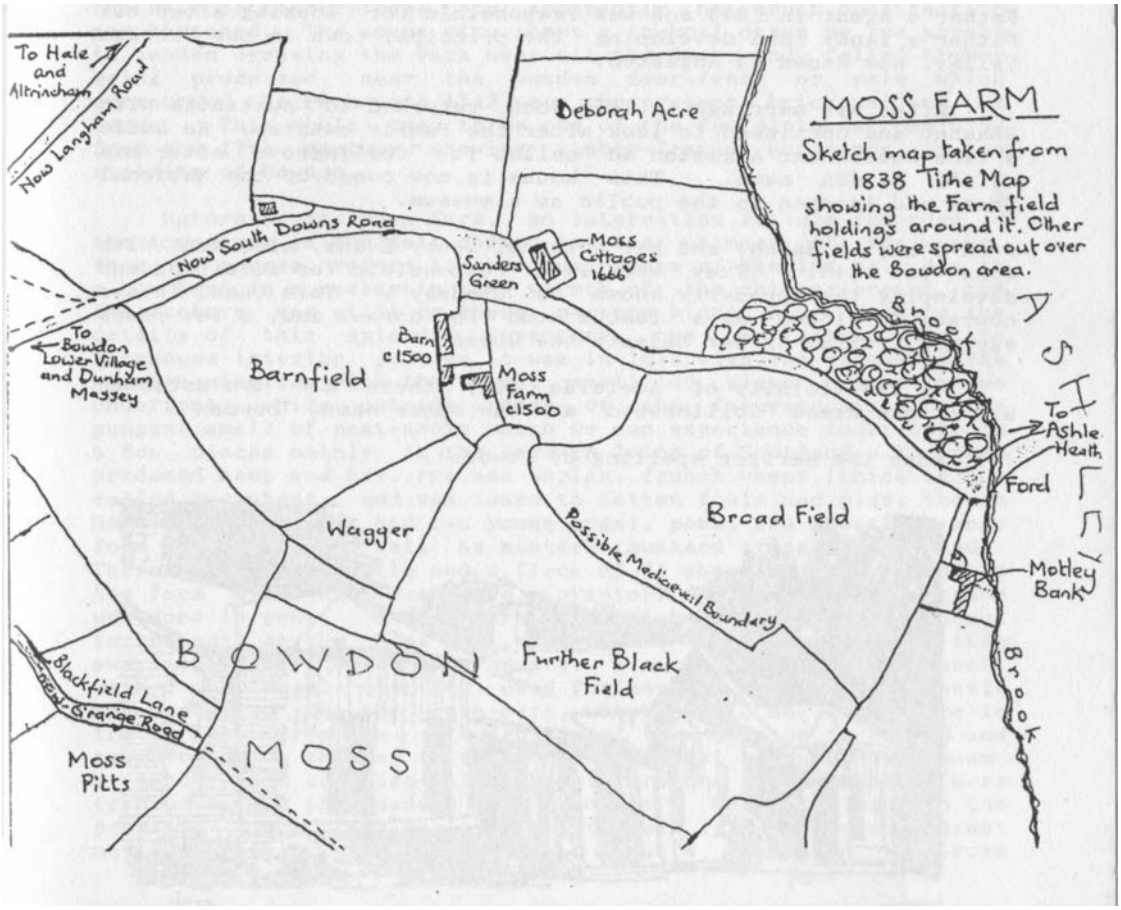
The farm produced hemp and hay, rye and barley, french wheat (which is now called buckwheat, and was used to fatten fowls and pigs, though Moss Farm then only had two young hogs), peas, and possibly some form of corn as well as mustard (mustard stones are listed). There were a few cattle and a flock of 21 sheep and lambs, and as the farm of Bowdon Moss, the inventory implies that some trade was done in peat. There were 2 wheel-barrows to move the cut turves out on the Moss and a turf-cart in which to carry them away; there were also a corn-cart, a muck-cart, and a tumbrel, with 2 new wheels for it, used for marling. Iron-bound wheels are specified for the corn-cart, which would no doubt have to travel away from the soft ground of the farm onto rutted and rough roads on the way to the corn-mill, most probably at Dunham, or maybe even to Ross Mill, Hale. Produce and provisions were transported by pack-saddle and panniers.

Beer was made on the premises since the barley was turned into malt in a ‘great malting vessel' and there was a 'malte arke' in the Cross Chamber. There was an old spinning-wheel in the kitchen, but no mention of any jersey-weaving which Alice Walker thought took place before the Walker's time. The ‘big knobs of the jersey-hooks’ on the two beams projecting from each side of the house- place, noted by Alice, must have appeared much later than William Sanders's time, since it is clear that he had a thriving farm and spinning and weaving were not necessary to supplement his income. In personal property, he left books - no titles are given but they would include the Family Bible - and a long bow with a few arrows as well as a sword, boots and spurs, and two daggers, so he may have served at one time in the Elizabethan militia of which nothing is known at present in this area. Two interesting items in this inventory were a double brake and two single brakes, these being tools for stripping willows ready for basket- making, and a woodcock net. The woodcock is a small but fleshy bird normally wintering in this part of England and happy in open woodland, though Coward did say that some did stay all year and breed in this locality. It would seem that the Sanders family supplemented their winter diet with fresh meat of a woodcock or two each, which must have been a welcome change from the salt beef and mutton, and strips of bacon usually eaten.

The four appraisers of the inventory, Ralph Hewitt, Edmund Simpson, John Drinkwater and Richard Urmston, all neighbours of William, took all his pewter valued at £2 5s 4d as their fee for their labours. Unfortunately no will has survived so the full extent of William's estate and the details of his beneficiaries are not known. Only his eldest son, John Sanders, appears in the inventory and he received 9s 6d on the day of his father's burial, possibly a repayment of his father's debt to him. When Samuel's mother, widow Dorothy, held the farm at the time of the Commonwealth Church Lands Survey in 1654, the land leased was 75 acres in extent which included land elsewhere in Bowdon and parts of other people's houses, and was valued at £36 9s 8d. The farm premises were then recorded as consisting of the three-bay farmhouse, a barn, a stable, an orchard, a garden and a farmyard, and that the Drinkwater family were still neighbours, that one of the fields by the Bollin had the name Sanders Bank, and that over at the Eyebrooks were several adjacent strips in the residual mediaeval field later to be named Sanders Field. There was also right of turbary in Bowdon Moss.

The 1665 inventory of Samuel Sanders's goods and chattels, etc., unfortunately does not give any indication of the rooms in the farmhouse. It does show 3 spinning wheels, but, as no wool is mentioned, they may have been employed for spinning the hemp and flax produced. A pig was now kept and a flock of 12 sheep and lambs, which would seem to be for meat production only. William Sanders's inventory of 1709 again details the rooms in the farmhouse, with some now having different names from those of 90 years earlier - a Great Parlour, a Great Chamber, the House, the Chamber over the House, the Kitchen, the Kitchen Chamber, the Plaster Chamber, and two Butteries. Clearly, from Alice Walker's recollections of the 19th century farm, the basic Hall-house design remains despite all the alterations over the centuries.

The 1838 Tithe Map shows Moss Farm with its long barn and cart- house opposite Moss Cottages and Sanders Green, and that one of the nearby farm fields was called Deborah Acre. This field was named in the 18th century after Deborah, wife of William Sanders, and was remembered as such or as 'Devisacre' (a corruption of 'Debbiesacre' no doubt) by Alice Walker. Certainly the Sanders family in their long occupationof Moss Farm must have done their share in shaping the landscape of that end of Bowdon by turf-cutting, draining, marling, taking in the so-called waste lands, and also gradually extending the productive land as Bowdon Moss - 'the great deep Bog' noted by Sir Peter Leicester in 1666 - was slowly drained. It seems certain that the Sanders's must have been there at Moss Farm for some time before the 1580s since they were well-established yeomen at that time and their farmhouse with its hall design constructed with crucks and timber-frame on a sandstone base would probably date from the previous century, but only further expert physical examination on the spot will find the clues and perhaps some of the answers. It is reasonable to conclude that Moss Farm is the oldest house in continuous occupation in Bowdon.



The Australian Connection
by Henry Ward

The records in our Parish Church of Bowdon show that, on 10th May 1855, John Howard Angas married Susanne Collins the daughter of Richard Collins and his wife Sarah. According to the Census records of 1851 the Collins family lived in Albert Square Bowdon.

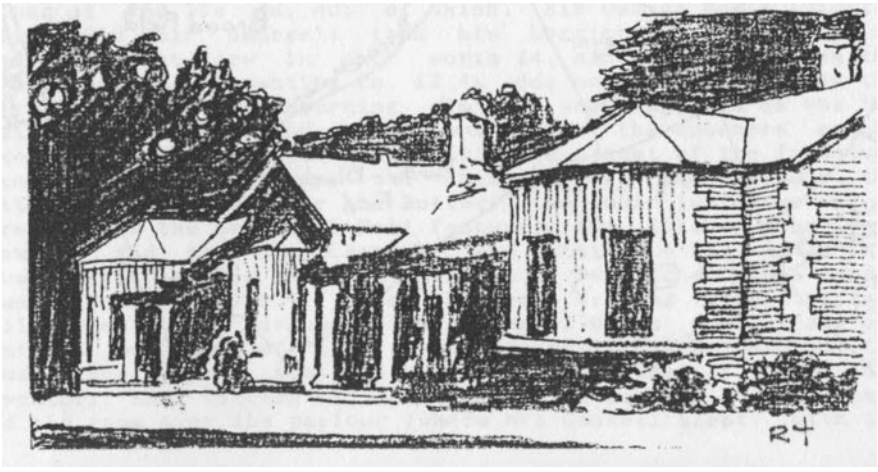
John Howard Angas was the son of George Fife Angas, a merchant, of Cheetham Hill, Manchester. The latter was however, best known for his part in the development of South Australia, and in May 1835 was appointed a Commissioner of the South Australian Company. He was responsible for sending several ships out there, including the "Buffalo" with Captain John Hindmarsh who became the first Governor of South Australia.

George Fife Angas, it appears, did not enjoy robust health and did not, himself, go out to Australia until 1850, at the age of 61. However his son, John, had already gone out as his Father's agent in 1843 and was responsible for looking after his Father's lands and developing the principal town in the Barossa Valley, now known as Angaston.

After his marriage in 1855 John returned to Australia with Susanne and continued to look after the family estates. He built a fine house near Angaston and called it "Collingrove" after his wife's maiden name. This house is now owned by the National Trust and is open to the public as a museum.

John's sister Sarah, and her husband, Henry Evans, also went with John in 1843. They were later responsible for acquiring and developing the property known as "Lindsay". This was, in due course, developed as a famous stud for horses and, a few years ago was visited by Her Majesty the Queen.

In the vicinity of Adelaide City there are two suburban areas, one named. "Collinswood" and the other named "Bowden"! (NB Note the earlier spelling of Bowden)



Memories of Dunham House

by Ronald Trenbath

During the inter-war years Dunham House was the residence of Major Sincton, a very popular sporting man, who is still remembered with great affection and some amusement by many of the older members of the rural community. A keen dog fancier, with particular interest in German Shepherd Dogs or Alsations, as they had been renamed for patriotic reasons in 1914 the Major turned his large stables into what might be described as luxury Kennels, under the direction of a Kennel Manageress who lived in the adjoining lodge.

As a service to the local community he would very kindly take other owners' dogs, as boarders, if a need arose, and it was under these circumstances that my father would board our dogs when we went on holiday, and as one who has been devoted to dogs from childhood, I was always delighted to have any opportunity to visit the Dunham House Kennels.

With the outbreak of war, and consequent end to family holidays, I no longer had any reason to visit the Kennels and it was not until 1942 that I learned that Dunham House had been requisitioned by the military and that the Kennels had been transferred to Mrs Manley's establishment in Booth Road. It was, by coincidence, that about this time a bracken fire broke out near to Shepherds Cottages. My father and I went to offer assistance to the policemen, who had discovered it while on bicycle patrol and who were trying unsuccessfully to deal with it. We were asked to hasten to Dunham House and request that troops be sent to help deal with the blaze.

I can still remember, very distinctly, on arriving at the gates, being confronted by a guard who was very agitated at our request. He called an officer who appeared equally disturbed but promised to see what he could do if we returned quickly to the scene of the fire. The significance of this event lies in the fact that even the local police did not know that Dunham House was not just an ordinary military unit with soldiers billeted in it, and that it was in fact a school for secret agents. I passed the house on numerous occasions during the war after that time and never for a moment suspected that its occupants were in any way different, or more special, than those in any of the many other locally requisitioned houses.

The authorities were however very naive if they thought that Rostherne Mere "was an ideal lake for these early experiments because it was reasonably well hidden from the public gaze" as I, and many others, often rode to Rostherne to watch the drop and rescue operations without let or hindrance from any authority, although we all thought that we were witnessing RAF Air Crew training exercises.

There was however one local man who knew all about the activities at Dunham House and this was Harry Aspby, who had been Major Sincton's gardener, and who had been asked by the War Office to remain in their employment at Dunham House throughout the war, with instructions not to talk about anything he observed there.

A very reliable man, Harry could be trusted to keep secrets and having served in France during the first World War he was very interested in meeting the Free French but it was much later, when secrecy was no longer required, that he recalled some of his memories including the occasion when great excitement was aroused when one student was arrested and taken away when it was discovered that he, or she, was a Nazi sympathiser who had infiltrated the school.

Not long after the ending of hostilities wild rumours began to circulate regarding local Secret Service activities with Dunham House being named as the Headquarters of the Free French Resistance, and exaggerated tales of General de Gaulle and agents being shipped in and out of France via Ringway and Bowdon. It is only now, forty-five years later, that John Chartres has unearthed the whole story in his instructive article "The War Time History of Dunham House".

The lodge to the house was later sold as a separate dwelling and named "Deer Leap", followed by the Stables which were converted into a house called "Hunters Moon", but later renamed "The Dunham Belfry", followed by the main house which was bought by developers and turned into flats but retained the name "Dunham House" .