

# *The Bowdon Sheaf*

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**FRANCIS TILNEY STONEX, VICAR OF BOWDON, 1919 - 1920**  
**By Norman T Stonex**

The following article is based on biographical notes provided by the Reverend Stonex's son, Norman, in 1969. Francis Tilney Stonex was born in Great Yarmouth, on 26th September, 1857, where his father, Henry, was organist at the Parish Church. Educated at Yarmouth Grammar School, Francis Stonex later attended Trinity College, Dublin, and graduated from Wells Theological College to be ordained a deacon in 1880 and a priest in 1881, after which he served as a curate at St. Mary's Church in Taunton.

In 1883 he was appointed curate at St. Michael's Church, Claughton, in Birkenhead, to commence his ministry in the diocese of Chester for the remainder of his life, becoming perpetual curate of Holy Trinity, also in Birkenhead in 1887. In 1890 Stonex married Alice Pring, daughter of Dr James Pring, of Taunton, by whom he had four sons (one of whom died in 1918 during the First World War,) and a daughter, and in the following year he was appointed Vicar of Bredbury, near Stockport, until 1893 when he became Vicar of St. Peters, Chester.

This appointment lasted until 1905 when he moved to St James, New Brighton, where he remained until after the war during which time he saw the building of the Church Hall and commencement of the erection of the daughter Church of All Saints. He was appointed Rural Dean of Wallasey in 1911 and Honorary Canon of Chester in 1917.

Stonex was offered the living of Bowdon by Bishop Jayne in 1919, but declining health made him hesitate in immediately accepting the offer until his doctor assured him that he might expect to live for a further ten years, after which he accepted the living and was instituted on 21st March of that year and moved to Bowdon Vicarage for the induction service on 26th April. The Vicarage at that time was situated in a house on Park Road, with views across the Bollin Valley to Rostherne, and a large garden which his son fought a losing battle to maintain.

On May 17th, within a month of the induction service, Canon Stonex was taken ill with severe pain. A doctor was summoned from Hale, who at once diagnosed cancer with a life expectancy of nine months, a prediction which proved to be nearly accurate. During the summer and autumn of 1919 he worked in the face of increasing pain and weakness, making his last appearance in church on Advent Sunday, 30th November. He died on 13th January, 1920, at the age of 63.

In all his parishes Canon Stonex, and his family, received great kindness and affection from the parishioners, and in none was this more touching than that of the people of Bowdon, to whom the appointment of a dying man, so soon after the death of Archdeacon Maitland Wood, must have been a bitter disappointment.

It was characteristic of their feeling and their generosity, at that time, that they chose, as their chief memorial to him, a gift of £1000 to his widow who still had two sons to educate. Mrs Stonex bought a house in Bowdon Vale where she lived for seven years.

**BOWDON IN THE 17th CENTURY**  
**Evidence about Bowdon's fields found in a 1636 Bible**  
**by Peter Kemp**

A 17th century Bible in the possession of a descendant through the Pownalls and Carters of Rostherne of the Tipping family branch which left Dunham Massey to settle at Rostherne in mid-century, has provided a fresh piece of evidence about Bowdon's fields around the time of the 1654 Church Lands Survey, and further knowledge of the residual mediaeval field system. The Bible, printed in 1636, contains entries of births of Tippings including that of Isaac born 1612 who made a note of his Bowdon land holdings when he was 15 years of age. Isaac was the youngest son of a William Tipping of Rostherne, and the Bible entry reproduced here may be a place of safety resorted to, on the advice of his father, in order to record details of his landholding during the uncertainties of the Commonwealth period, or it may simply be a youthful expression of adolescent feelings of importance. Nothing else was recorded in this Bible other than this statement and the record of births of some of the Rostherne Tippings between 1627 and 1786.

Transcribed, the entry reads :-

"A p(er)fect note of all my Lounts of ye hall hill and Churchfield hall hill begininge at ye Gravihole ye 2th: ye 10th: ye 18th: ye 21: ye 23:  
Alsoe from Bowdons field towards hale in ye Churchfield side ye 1th: ye 9th: ye 15th: ye 17th: ye 23: ye 26th: ye 30th for this Lount John Leather was contented to pay 3 dayes sheering for ye getting up of his barne wittnes John : Birch : Note yt all he Lounts in ye Churchfield doe goe through over crosse hale Gate  
By mee Isaac Tipinge  
July the 27th (16)57"

As indicated in the 1651 document, here is confirmation that the strip-field system of Churchfield and Hall Hill or Field still existed at that time. They note that the Churchfield strips extended on the other side of the road to Hale seems to point to its location being on the Hale side, to the east, of the church rather than on the Dunham side as previously supposed. The term 'Gravllhole' may refer to a sand-pit rather than a gravel working, sand being used then to lighten heavy soils in the moss-lands and clay-lands, but at present there is no due to its location on the Downs hillside. John Leather was a yeoman and butcher of Bowdon.



The term 'Bowdons field' no doubt means a field held by the Bowdon family of Bowdon rather than a common field for Bowdon people. The term 'Gate' was Middle English for a road being a right of way, so this would be the main roadway between Bowdon and Hale, and it seems certain that this lay along the line of the present Langham Road rather than Stamford Road. Complementing Loont Field on the north (uphill) side of Langham Road in 1838 were two fields to the south called Botty and Nearer Botty, names seemingly derived from the mediaeval strip-field term 'butts', and the next two fields nearer to Hale were called Further Cross and Cook's Cross which may be the same field-names as the 'over crosse' mentioned in the Bible entry.

It is of interest to note that another Isaac Tipping of the same group of families, third son of William the Elder, yeoman of Dunham Massey and Bailiff to Lord Delamer, who died in 1677 styling himself 'gentleman' and of Acton Grange and Norton Hall (he may have been bailiff or steward to Sir Richard Brooke of Norton 'my much honoured master'), left as one of his bequests to his second wife in his will, a 'Messuage, Lands, Tenement, (etc. 'in Bowdon') Commonly called and knowne by the name of Bow Greene Tenem(en)ts'

### **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND IN BOWDON IN QUEEN ANNE'S REIGN by Marjorie Cox**

Henry Prescott, from whose diary this item is taken, was an important ecclesiastical official at Chester, where, from 1686 until his death in 1719, he was deputy registrar of the diocesan registry. Since for almost all of this period the registrar was an absentee, Prescott in fact acted as registrar, issuing all-important documents such as probate of wills, marriage licences and institutions of clergy to benefices.

Dr John Addy, who has edited Prescott's very detailed diary for the Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, describes him as a 'keen collector of Roman artefacts and coins'. It is in this context that the entries in the diary for June 18 and 19, 1708, relating to Bowdon should be read. On June 18, while at Frodsham on diocesan business, Prescott records, 'I write to Mr Edmonds of Bowden (sic) about the old vessell I expected here.' After his return to Chester he records on the next day, June 19, 'After dinner the old Vessell comes, sent by Mr Edmonds. I send him with my letter a Guinea and pay the special messenger 4s. with intimation that if hee approve not of the Guinea, the vessell shall be returnd. It was found this day 3 weeks by a Man digging 2yds perpendicular in a Moss a mile from the Church of Bowden.'

John Edmonds has figured in an earlier number of the Bowdon Sheaf (No. 4) as an agricultural improver of the period, probably giving the name to one or more fields. Since then I have discovered that he was the tenant under the 2nd Earl of Warrington of Bowdon Hall and its estate, and occupied the pew in the parish church previously used by the Bowdons of Bowdon who sold the hall to the Booths of Dunham Massey in 1650. Edmonds was steward for collecting rents to the 1st Earl of Warrington, Henry Booth, and almost certainly also to his son, George, the 2nd Earl. It may be that the 'old vessell' sent to Prescott was found on part of Edmonds's estate, or alternatively that Prescott wrote to him as the steward of the Earl, the manorial lord. Presumably the 'vessell' was, or was thought to be, Roman: the sum of one guinea for it was considerable at the time.

### Sources

The Diary of Henry Prescott LL.B. Deputy Registrar of Chester Diocese. ed. John Addy, Vol. I 1704-11 (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Vol. 127.

Dunham Massey Papers, deposited by the National Trust In the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

### **DICK TURPIN'S LOCAL ALIBI** **by Harrison Ainsworth**

This poem from "Rookwood" records Turpin's legendary ride from New Bridge Hollow, Bowdon, to the Kilton Inn, Hough Green Near High Legh.

Once it happened in Cheshire, near Dunham, I popped  
on a horseman alone, whom I suddenly stopped.  
That I lightened his pockets you'll readily guess.  
Quick work makes Dick Turpin when mounted on Bess  
Now It seems the man knew me "Dick Turpin" says he  
"You'll swing for this Job, as ye live, do ye see".  
I laughed at his threats and rows of redress;  
I was sure of an alibi then with Black Bess  
The road was a hollow, a sunken ravine;  
Overshadowed completely by woods like a screen  
I climbed the bank, and I needs must confess  
that one touch of the spur grazed the side of Black Bess.  
Brake, brook, meadow, and ploughed field Bess fleetly bestrode.  
As the crow wings her flight we selected our road  
We arrived at Hough Green in five minutes or less  
My neck had been saved by the speed of Black Bess  
Stepping carelessly forward I lounged on the green  
Taking excellent care that by all I am seen;  
Some remarks on time's flight to the Squires I address  
But I say not a word of the flight of Black Bess  
I mentioned the hour, it was just about four.  
Play a rubber of bowls, I think danger is o'er  
When athwart my next game, like a chessmate at Chess.  
Comes the rider in search of the man on Black Bess .  
What matter the details? Off with triumph I came  
He swears to the hour and the Squires swear the same.  
I had robbed him at four. While at four they profess  
I was quietly bowling - all thanks to Black Bess.

## THE EVOLUTION OF A SETTLEMENT

by  
Geoffrey Barker

The settlement of an area is determined partly by its geology and the consequent fertility and natural vegetation. Patterns of human settlement are to be seen more from studies of the archeological sites over a wide area than in any one location. Patricia Phillips (The Prehistory of Europe, 1980) has indicated general patterns of the evolution of settlement within which that of Bowdon may be viewed.

Paleolithic man lived before the last ice age and little or no remains are extant at this latitude. Mesolithic man came after the Ice age and was a hunter of herding animals and a food gatherer. No remains are known locally. Neolithic man (4300 B.C. onward) was the earliest farmer. A Neolithic stone hammer has been found near the Bollin and a flint arrow head of the Neolithic-bronze age period near Ashley Heath. Neolithic man was here.

The change to settled farming became necessary to man as the vegetation gradually changed after the Ice age from tundra (suitable for grazing wild herds) to high forest (unsuitable for grazing and too high for browsing). These changes spanned a period of arid climate (the boreal period when the post-glacial lake in Bowdon probably dried up partially to form a bog) and a following warmer and wetter period (the Atlantic period). It was in this period that man herded his own cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. To feed himself and the animals, he grew wheat (emma), lentils, vetch and six-row barley, as shown by pollen analysis. The increase in the protein content of food is thought to have led to an increase in population and thus the Neolithic farmers came to predominate over the Mesolithic hunters.

Whereas Mesolithic man preferred riverside sites Neolithic man preferred spring lines. Bowdon would have presented such a site along the base of the glacial gravel at the level where the boulder clay begins.

Neolithic man ploughed with stone axes. Technology of farming improved through the bronze to the iron age, allowing less tractable soils to be cultivated. Thus an early Bowdon settlement could have started at the base of the hill And subsequently spread out towards the Bollin. The Bow Green farm area, being situated on a mound of gravel surrounded by clay, may also have been settled early.

Bow Lane near to Bow Green farm and the lane leading to Pool Bank farm give a good view of the terrain of Bowdon which, together with the nature of the glacial deposits (gravel or clay), enables a mental picture to be formed of possible early settlements which are indicated by the Neolithic finds and the Bronze Age burial site in Dunham New Park.

## OBITUARY TO A BOWDON CURATE

The following report appeared in "Harrop's Manchester Mercury" on November 5th 1754:

"We are informed from Altrincham, that a melancholy accident happened there to the Revd. Mr. Gifford, Curate of Boden which is related in the following manner. About one o'clock yesterday morning he rose as is supposed in a dream, and opened the window of his room, from whence he jumped to the ground, and was so terribly bruised in the fall, that he expired that afternoon in great agonies. This gentleman had performed divine service both in the morning and afternoon at St. Ann's Church in this town on Sunday and went home that evening. He has left a young wife to bewail his loss, who is now lying in of her first child".

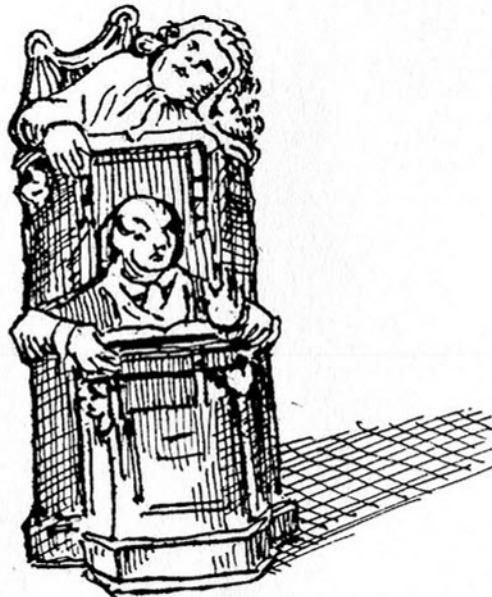
## SALE OF CHURCH FURNITURE

The following announcement was made in "Harrop's Manchester Mercury" on April 7th 1761:

"To be sold on reasonable terms at the house of William Yarwood known by the sign of the Green Dragon in Bowdon near Altrincham in Cheshire.

An oak pulpit & sounding Board, with a pair of stairs leading to the Pulpit, both in good plight & condition & fit for the use of any country chapel.

Also two stately fresh peices or figures of Moses & Aaron, near 8 foot high, which by reason of a usefull alteration lately made in the Parish Church of Bowdon cannot be conveniently put up there again. Whoever is desirous to buy the said Pulpit & ornaments, may apply to the Church Wardens of Bowdon aforesaid or the said William Yarwood".



THE PARSON & CLERK