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Bowdon in the 16th and 17th centuries
The Booths and the Tippings - Landed Gentry and Yeoman Retainers
by Peter Kemp

Part 1

When one looks at the histories of landed gentry such as the Booths of Dunham Massey, not a great deal is revealed about the people associated with them or employed by them who carried out their master's orders, or those lower in the social order who were not only trusted and respected tenants but friends, all of whom contributed to the prosperity of the great house, and, by so doing; themselves as well. Such a local family were the Tippings in their association with the Booths of Dunham Hall.

The old saying, "From rags to riches and back again in three generations", applies to some extent to the Dunham Massey Tippings who rose in the 17th century from husbandmen to yeomen to gentlemen before disappearing from the ranks of Steward and Bailiff to the Booths for ever.

Tippings have been around this corner of Cheshire for a very long time, and some were local churchmen about whom little is known so far. Hugh Tipping was Rector and the miller of Ashton-on-Mersey c1522 to 1525 where he was involved in disputes over rights of way, forcible entry with seizures of hay, etc., and concerning the tithe of the corn-mill when an arbitration hearing ruled that James Massey of Sale had to pay Hugh and his assigns an annual payment for the tithe of the mill; the record of incumbents in St Martin's Church, Ashton-on-Mersey shows Hugh Tipping as Rector from 1525 to 1566, and a George Tipping later, from 1613 to 1619.

A Henry Tipping was a Chantry Priest at St Mary's Church, Bowdon, c1550 to c1557, and as patrons of the living of Bowdon, the Booths would have approved the appointment of Henry as Chantry Priest. The Chantry Chapel of the Booths, called the Jesus Chapel at that time, was built after the death of William Booth of Dunham Massey who died on 6 April 1477, "leaving certain lands in trust to provide a chaplain to pray for the health of his soul and that of his ancestors and descendants, in a Chantry Chapel which he desired to be built in Bowdon Church for that purpose; this was afterwards built, and was said from its spaciousness "to be a faire Chappelle". (Ingham).

In Henry Tipping's time, the will of Cicely Booth, daughter of George the fifth owner of Dunham, dated 28 December 1557, makes the request that she also be buried in the Jesus Chapel, provides money for prayers to be said for her, and goes on to make bequests to the priests - "Itm I geve and bequethe unto Sr Thoms Strettell Sr Henrie Tippinge and Sr John Percyvall i.j^l v.j^s vii.j^d a pece." (Note: the term Sir was a priest's courtesy title, not a knighthood). A John Tipping was one of the witnesses to the will. Its date, 28 December 1557, seems rather late for a Chantry Priest still to be in office considering the Act of Edward VI which abolished such positions in the Church, and further research is needed about Bowdon during this period of change.

A Henry Tipping of the same time was a husbandman at Dunham Massey, with a wife Maud, four sons, William, Robert, John and George, and two daughters, Elizabeth and Alice. His inventory of 1590 shows him to have been a successful small farmer with a valuation of £73. 13. 0d. and being owed in addition, £12. 15. 2d., average to good amounts for those days in this locality. Certainly he had sufficient spare cash to make loans, and among his debtors was George Bowdon of Bowdon Hall who owed him 20s., and likewise Mr John Booth of Dunham Hall, whom he excused repayment possibly in deference to his landlord. This respect was also apparent in the request in his will of 22 July 1590 that "the Right Worshippful George Booth, esquire" should oversee its execution.

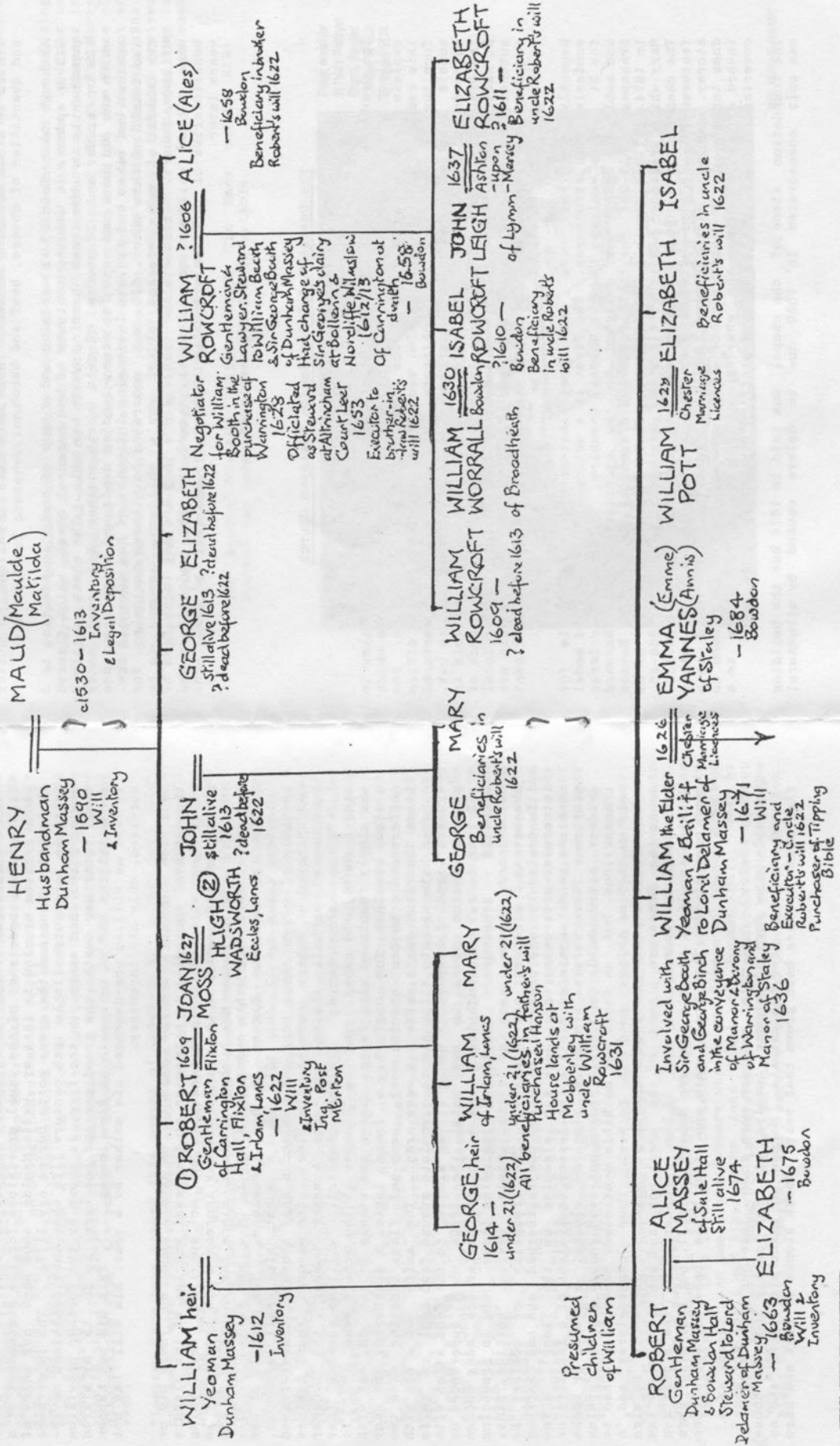
His wife Maud was left a third part of his estate "according to the Custome of the Countie", the eldest son and heir, William, being given all the farm "Implements of husbandry" as his thirdpartofthe inheritance. Presumably Maud, as one of a lease of lives tenancy arrangement, took over the farm maybe with son John to help her (as his later claim seems to imply), and William moved on to another tenancy in Dunham. His inventory taken after his death in 1612 shows him to have been a successful yeoman farmer, being valued at £146. 9. Id. Henry Tipping also made one of the usual provisions for the sustenance of a widow - "Item my mind is that my wyffe Maulde shud have her share of the great panne and the great potte During her liffe". The importance of these large utensils in 16th century life when they contained never-ending stews and soups on the fire, is shown by the further provision that, after her death, the great pan and pot were to go to "my s(ai)d sonne William and so to remain as Eire loomes...," This did not happen in fact as William pre-deceased his mother by a year; his will has not survived, only his inventory.

Maud died in 1613, and was said to be aged "about 80 years old or thereabouts" according to witnesses at the legal hearing of the dispute about her will which unfortunately has not survived. Her farming skills and management of the farm's economy increased its prosperity in the 23 years following her husband's death, since the valuation of her inventory, including debts owing of £22. 2. 1d., was £215, 11. 2d., triple the previous figure in his inventory, The details of her inventory taken on 22 July 1613 show a substantial small farmhouse, probably of two or three bays and one and a half storeys, timber-framed and thatched as others were at the time, with several rooms besides "the howse" or hall living-room - the "Longher Chamber", the "Longher Loft", the "harre chamber" (?higher chamber), "Williams chamber" (her eldest son's old room), and the "Chamber at the greife hede" (?). It was simply furnished with forms, chairs and stools to sit on, but with a few cushions for comfort, a frame table, a dishboard, and many coffers and arks for storing wool, hemp and flax, together with two items described as "a saffe & a wage arke". The "saffe" was a box with woven hair sides to allow air to circulate around food kept on "saffe dysshes", and to keep flies out. It was similar to the food safes with perforated zinc sides in use until the 1940s when superseded by refrigerators.

Although there was a lot of pewterware, many wooden utensils - treenware - was listed including those used in producing butter and cheese, such as combs, bowls, basins, bottles, pans, cheesevats, a churn and dishes. The frugality of comfort is illustrated by the presence of only one featherbed and one chaffbed (otherwise mattresses were there for sleeping on the floor), a few cushions, and a painted cloth - the lesser equivalent of a tapestry or picture. There were no armchairs, pictures, clocks, mirrors, or books evident. Presumably Maud could reckon and read enough for her farming transactions, but, as there was no Bible mentioned, probably she had to rely on having things read out to her. Four "chandeleres" and "A Rysshe Candelstycke" provided lighting at night. There is no sign among the brassware listed of the greatpot and pan that Henry had designated heirlooms (nor even in the inventories of the eldest son William in 1612, nor his next son Robert in 1622), but they might have been one of the four brass pots and four brass pans her appraisers found. Hemp, barley, rye, oats and corn were grown, together with "grenes" (possibly some form of cabbage), turnips, etc. for cattle and the house and some hay for the animals.

TIPPING

Three generations descending from Henry of Dunham Massey



No peas or beans are listed, and no flax seems to have been grown that year, though stocks of flax and hemp in the form of yarn and cloth are shown as well as some hemp drying in the kiln. It is evident that Maud and her daughter Alice wove cloth from the flax and hemp not only for their own use but as a product of the farm, even though no spinning wheels or looms are mentioned. 25 cattle including 7 calves were kept, as well as 4 horses, 22 sheep including 8 lambs, 2 pigs, geese, and hives of bees. There were 14 fleeces valued at 1s. each, produced for sale as such since no wool was listed in stock or being worked. There were also 3 gallons of butter and quantities of cheese, beef and bacon.

Although Maud left 2 silver pins and a pair of hooks in addition to 3 silver spoons, it was the contents of her personal chest which figured prominently in the legal hearing about her will. The chest contained £29 in silver and 27 pieces of gold worth another £13, ready money which the old lady had kept for money-lending deals and as an insurance against bad times and for the increasing infirmity of her advanced age. About half of this money, £20, was, according to witness testimony, for the benefit of her deceased eldest son's children, assumed to be William, Robert, Elizabeth and Isabel since they are not identified by name. These children are, however, named as the godchildren and beneficiaries of William's brother Robert in his will of 1622, nine years later.

To be continued

The Design Model for Bowdon Wesleyan Church by Tim Knox

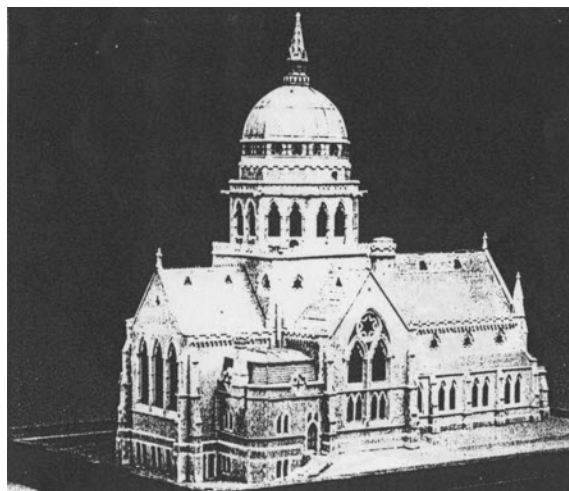
The Drawings Collection of the British Architectural Library aims to collect not only architectural drawings but also other objects which explain the development and practice of architecture in Britain. For this reason, architectural models, medals, drawing instruments, office furniture and portraits of architects are acquired. Architectural models have long been an important part of the design process but, being delicate and frequently large, they rarely survive. Models in the Drawings Collection range from James Gibbs' model for the Church of St Martin-in-the-Fields of 1721 to models by Erno Goldfinger for local authority housing of the 1960s and 1970s. Only design models are acquired and preference is given to those which are of significant buildings.

Recently acquired were two fine nineteenth-century models for ecclesiastical structures. The first is a meticulously detailed model for St Paul's Wesleyan Church, Bowdon, Cheshire. This unusually large and ambitious chapel was designed by the architect William Hayward Brakspear (1819-98) for the prosperous dissenting connexion of Bowdon in 1874. It was possibly intended to rival the nearby Church of St Mary which Brakspear had rebuilt for the established church in 1856-60. The chapel, in a freely interpreted Gothic of the Decorated period, featured an arcaded octagon over the crossing above which another storey, combining castellations and half-timbering, culminated in a dome topped with a small fleche. This curious Gothic dome found no inward expression within the church and indeed served merely as a covering for an extensive viewing platform behind the arcading.

The foundation stone of the chapel was laid in 1874 but the building was only consecrated in 1880 due to delays caused by structural problems which necessitated the rebuilding of the dome and lantern. A settlement on the fees was not reached until 1884. Brakspear's unconventional marriage to his first wife's sister led him to be increasingly ostracised from society and the chapel was his last major work. The model remained in the possession of a descendant of the architect until its acquisition, with the help of a private benefactor, by the Drawings Collection. By family tradition, the model was made by the architect's son, W S Brakspear. It is made of wood, cardboard, composition and glass on a wooden base with its original glass cover, in itself a rare survival and doubtless responsible for the model's fine state of preservation.

A very complete and finely executed set of drawings for the building survives and it is conceivable that this model was made assist in fund-raising efforts for its construction. chiefly remembered today as a pupil in the office of Sir Charles Barry where he worked on the designs for the rebuilding of the Palace of Westminster. The chapel at Bowdon reveals him to be an architect of considerable originality and invention. It was demolished in 1968. Sir Nicholas Pevsner in *The Buildings of England, Cheshire*, arrived just in time, noting: "This Gothic monstrosity with a crossing dome being demolished. One regrets its disappearance. It was the most ambitious ecclesiastical building in Bowdon."

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Design model for St Paul's Wesleyan Church, Bowdon, Cheshire by WH Brakspear, 1874

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Highway Robberies at Bowdon by Maurice Ridgway

Highway robberies were not infrequent about 1800, and there were some places such as that known as Molly Charcoal's Pit in the first park, which no one cared to pass alone after dark. About 1820 Mr John Warburton was robbed on the road opposite where Finney's Lodge now stands, and which was known then as Burying Lane. He was returning from Manchester on horseback, with a considerable sum of money about him, when he was stopped there by a man living towards Baguley and robbed of every penny he had. The man left his hat behind him, and this led to his detection. He was arrested, tried, convicted and executed. On the morning of the execution the man who recounted the story was working in a field in Hale in which there also worked the sweetheart of the condemned man, and the poor girl was obliged to leave her work as the morning wore on, overcome by grief at the thought of the terrible fate of her lover.

Other robberies occurred in connection with the salt trade which was prosecuted at Bowdon. Heavy duty was levied on it and it was sold at four pence a pound. The road in those days at New Bridge Hollow ran where the narrow wood is by the side of the present road. A formidable band of thieves were called Romper Lowes gang, after the leader. A gentleman called Mr Collinge engaged in the salt-carrying trade was returning home one night with a large sum of money when he was attacked in a road leading into Bow Green Lane and robbed. In the struggle he was pulled from his horse and, unable to disengage his feet from the stirrups was dragged along the ground, and killed. The thief was called Walker-, changed hats with his victim whether by accident or not does not transpire, and in the same night went to the Bleeding Wolf Inn where he sat drinking with another man called Hooley. When they rose to leave they each took the wrong hat, making the second exchange for Walker that night. But the act marked Hooley out for the scaffold. Mr Collinge's wife was a left handed sewer and had the very morning of the robbery stitched in the lining in his hat. She identified it and on this evidence Hooley was hung. His innocence was attested some years later by Walker, who undeterred by this incident, still continued his life of crime until apprehended for a robbery at Sale, and before his execution admitted that Hooley was innocent and that it had been he who had robbed Mr Collinge.



Bow Green Lane