

The Bowdon Sheaf

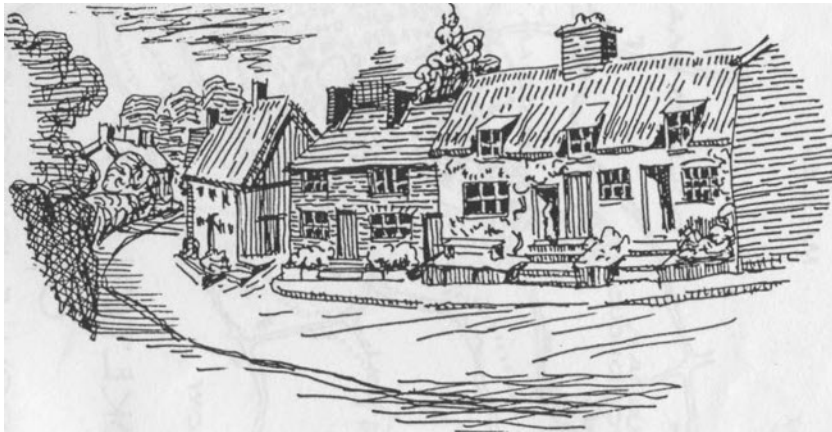
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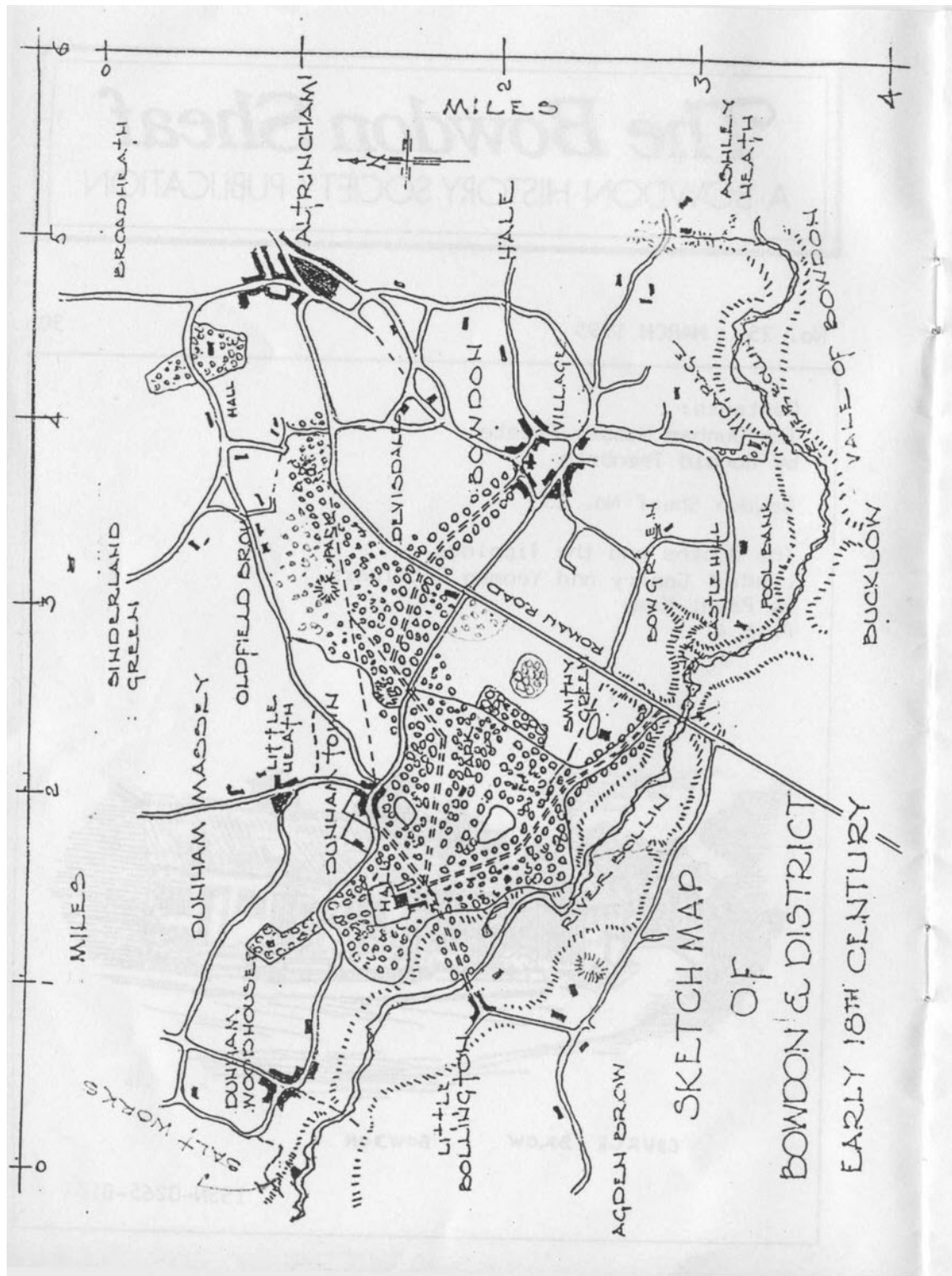
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CHURCH BROW BOWDON

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THE DUNHAM MASSEY ESTATE
by RONALD TRENBATH

This map, covering twenty five square miles of land in Dunham Massey and Bowdon in the early eighteenth Century, is based upon documents surviving from that time, as well as buildings still existing or known to have existed then. The Booth family, while not the only landowning family in the district, was certainly the most influential one, and it is interesting to note the large area of its parkland in relation to the the rest of the, mainly, agricultural land. The village at Bowdon consisted of a church, Bowdon Hall, a small cluster of cottages and possibly an inn, with the adjacent Devisdale used as common land for grazing and turf.

George Booth, Second Earl of Warrington, regenerated the Dunham Massey Estate, after years of neglect by his father and grandfather, and the date stones on many local farmhouses, as well as date stones on buildings at Dunham Massey Hall, indicate the vast scale of the development undertaken. Tenants on the estate were obliged to plant trees on the land they tenanted in order to replenish the dwindling stock of woodland which had deteriorated in the previous century.

John Edmonds, the Earl's Steward, who lived at Bowdon Hall, managed three tree nurseries at what are now Pitstead Covert, Headsman's (Edmonds) Covert and the garden to Parklands, in Charcoal Road. Edmonds was also responsible for introducing new methods for soil improvement which had dramatic results and were reported upon nationally.

George Booth also undertook a huge tree planting programme in his own parkland, redesigning the deer park, adjacent to the hall, with long avenues, or rides and large water features, based upon ideas introduced from Holland by William III. The whole of the deer park was encircled by a brick wall in the middle of the century. The main entrance to the park was by way of the Ash Walk which was entered off the main Chester Road, near where it crosses over the River Bollin. A driveway was also formed between the hall and Bowdon Church upon which the family ceremoniously rode, on horseback and in carriages on Sundays, which included what is now Green Walk, then a private road lined with trees.

Until the Bridgewater Canal was cut, later in the century, transport was confined to the main roads to Altrincham, Chester and Warrington for the distribution of farm produce to markets and also for salt from the Salt Works at Dunham Woodhouses. Road improvements during the course of the century made travel much more easy and more comfortable but the risk of highway robbery became more prevalent especially when trade improved and travellers, particularly merchants, had to carry large sums of money.

The Vicarage, later renamed the Priory, and the Glebe land were situated to the south east overlooking the river, and not in the village as often occurred, and Dunham Town provided property and accommodation for those connected with the hall and included a large walled garden for growing the more exotic fruit, vegetables and flowers required by the Earl and his family. (to be continued)

Bowdon Sheaf No. 25

This is the twenty fifth issue of Bowdon Sheaf which was first produced in October 1983 as the official publication of Bowdon History Society. It is a journal, published twice a year, in which anyone may write on any subject appertaining to the history of Bowdon, a policy which has resulted in a very wide range of articles being published covering aspects of Bowdon history and the heritage of the parish. The great interest aroused by the publishing of these articles has led to a large following of readers and contributors locally, as well as from other parts of the country and overseas.

While the Society will always reject trivia, it has consistently encouraged contributions which are of interest to the general public, as much as to professional historians, in the hope of engendering a lively interest in the rich local heritages, and it is very heartening to note the rewards of these efforts which are reflected in the sustained membership of the Society and the frequency of requests for further information from as far afield as East Germany, Canada and Australia.

The subjects covered and examined in Bowdon Sheaf have included folk memories, legends and reports on research by members of the Society resulting, in many instances, in the forming of impressions of life in Bowdon at given periods in the past. Research and the recording of information is proceeding at a very satisfactory rate but it is essential that this momentum is maintained and that contributors should continue their efforts for the benefit of future generations.

Erratum

It is noted that the reference to Mr H T Gaddum as living at the Priory when he was Chairman of Bowdon Urban District Council, recorded in the twenty fourth issue of Bowdon Sheaf is incorrect and that it was his son Mr H E Gaddum who lived there. We very much regret this error. An article on the Gaddum family will be featured in a future issue of the Sheaf.

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

Part 5

Nothing is known with any certainty about the origin and early life of Robert Tipping the Steward, but if he was the brother of William the Bailiff as is supposed, then he was a Dunham Massey man born around 1600-1610, and also a grandson of old Henry and Maud. Clearly he must have been knowledgeable and experienced enough in land and produce management, and displayed integrity and character of such promise early on for the Booths to take him into their trust and confidence as a retainer of ability to be in charge of their affairs. He was also of such standing in local society and sufficiently wealthy to marry into a family of ancient lineage, the Masseys of Sale.

The first record of him is in 1648 when he was described as "of Dunham Massey, gentleman" as a feoffee holding land for the use of the owner, George Booth. Young George Booth, who was to succeed to Dunham in 1652 and to be created Lord Delamer in 1661, married Elizabeth, daughter of the 1st Earl of Stamford, Henry Grey of Bradgate, Leicestershire in 1647. While in Leicestershire at this time he was assisting his father-in-law with the Parliamentary cause, and it is very probable that Robert Tipping was one of his gentleman retinue. Robert Tipping was one of the trustees signatory to a deed dated 10 January, 1647/8 putting property (the manor of Ashton-under-Lyne) into trust to provide jointure for Elizabeth Booth following the marriage; and on 30 December 1649, he was also a trustee and signatory to an indenture to provide portions for future daughters of George and Elizabeth Booth, where he was described as "of Bradgate, Leicestershire, gentleman". It is not known whether this means that Robert Tipping was then resident at Bradgate attending to Booth estate matters there, or whether the Greys had given him some property at Bradgate as a recognition of his services.

He was married to Alice Massey of Sale, daughter of James Massie of Sale Old Hall and Mary Leycester, daughter of Sir George Leycester of Toft, and they had one daughter, Elizabeth. From around 1655, Robert appears to have resided continuously in Dunham Massey, for in that year he was a witness with his brother William to a Yannes marriage over at Ashton-under-Lyne, and, as we have already noted, he was party to the lease of the salt house at Dunham Woodhouses.

William Rowcroft, his uncle-in-law and Steward to old Sir George Booth and his successor the future Lord Delamer, died in 1658, and it seems that Robert was then appointed Steward in his place. The post of Steward to the Booths was a position of great power and responsibility as the principal servant and right-hand man who deputised and acted for them not only in leases and rents, land purchases and bargaining, but also as their representative at the Court Leet at Altrincham where, among other things, the Steward selected the Mayor from a short list presented to him by the burgesses. The status in society of a Steward was that of gentleman, and the attainment of both titles was an ambition of several successful yeoman farmers as the peak of their social ladder. It is known that the Booths had up to this time shown their preference for local men, and that, with the size and spread of their estates over at least four counties, they occasionally employed two Stewards, with the second one being a lawyer to deal with the Court Baron where bye-laws were set, and with the legal aspects of their many leases and land titles, indentures and trusts.

We do not know, but there may have been a third kind of Steward at times, whose duties would have been mainly at Dunham Hall and were ceremonial requiring the wearing of a distinguishing livery, as occurred in other large estate houses. Thus it was, in his 50s, that Robert Tipping became George Booth's lieutenant and was to see his master humiliated in the 1659 uprising with the defeat of his men at Winnington Bridge near Northwich, arrested at Newport Pagnell disguised as a woman and imprisoned in the Tower of London, but then on release created Baron Delamer of Dunham Massey in 1661 for his part in the Restoration of Charles II. With these forced absences of his master and the family's habit of spending the latter months of the year at their town house in London, Robert Tipping as Steward exercised a great deal of power and influence over a wide area as the trusted deputy for the Booths.

He was a respected friend of the Puritan Vicar of Bowdon, James Watmough, who, when he died in 1660, left to "Mr. Robert Tippinge" in his will proved in 1661 "the booke in my studie entituled Carpenters Geographie". When in 1661 also, Charles II commanded that everyone should make a "Free and Voluntary Gift" as part of the replenishment of his Treasury, the list of Bowdon donors has Robert contributing the largest amount, 10 shillings.

It is probable that Robert took up residence at the old Bowdon Hall when he became Steward in 1659. Old Sir George Booth had bought the Hall in 1650 for £300 from William Bowdon, and a covenant, as part of the conveyance, seems to indicate a lease back for two lives, probably those of William and his wife Grace. However, no third life was specified and it seems that the lease may not have been put into effect. William Bowdon was of Dunham Woodhouses where he died in 1659, and there is no evidence that he ever went to live at the Hall. It seems certain that, with the Hall probably standing empty and in disrepair, George Booth decided to let it to his Steward, thus giving him a property befitting his status and charging him to put the house back in order. In so doing they were following the familiar pattern of Halls of old families becoming occupied by the new landlord's men. Robert Tipping's will and inventory show him to have been the richest man in Bowdon, and, since the evidence of the Hearth Tax Returns of 1664 and 1674 reveal his widow Alice living in the largest house in Bowdon, their house must have been the Bowdons' ancestral home, but by then enlarged and probably in a better state of repair. Although neither the Hearth Tax Returns nor Robert's will identify old Bowdon Hall, the indicated size of his house situated in the very small area of Bowdon Township confirms that it can only be old Bowdon Hall. Whether the improvements made to it were partly at Alice's instigation considering her upbringing at Sale Old Hall, and partly due to her husband's desire to demonstrate his better fortune and status as Steward, we can only surmise, but his inventory shows four more rooms and two galleries added to the old Bowdon family house. The Hearth Tax assessments record that the house had 8 hearths in 1664 and 1674. For comparison, Dunham Hall had 37 hearths and Ashley Hall had 31, which confirms the minor rank of old Bowdon Hall.

Unfortunately Robert's tenure of the office of Steward was only to last just over 4 years. He made his will on 19 February, 1662/3 when close to death, and his burial entry in the Bowdon Parish Register reads "Robert Tippinge, of Bowdon, agent and steward to George, Lord Delamer, was buried ye 21th day of ffebruary, 1662". His splendid inventory assessed his goods, chattels, etc. at £285, and his will bequeathed them and all his interests in lands and properties to his wife Alice, and after her, to his daughter Elizabeth. He also made provision for a posthumous son he hoped might be born, but that was not to be and sadly, his only child Elizabeth pre-deceased her mother in 1675. Only two of the properties, lands, etc. are named in the will. One at Mobberley in the tenancy of a Richard Cragg, which Alice still owned in 1672 as a freeholder according to Ormerod, was at Baguley Green (at the cross-roads just east of Mobberley Station now) ; and the other was a cottage in the tenure of Margaret Birch at Bollington (now Little Bollington) in 1666, again noted by Ormerod. All Alice's inheritance was for her use and to sell or dispose of "if shee and her twoe Brothers Richard Massey of Sale in the said County of Chester Esqr. and Willm. Massey of Sywell in the County of Northampton gentleman soo thinks fitt...." The two brothers-in-law were named as executors of the will.

The inventory gives us a very clear picture of the old Bowdon Hall, so much so that as each room is visited we can almost see the place as it was in our mind's eye. On the ground floor was the Hall, the Parlour, the Gray Chamber, the Green Chamber, the Nursery, another Chamber and Closet, and a Gallery; on the upper floor was a Room over the Gray Chamber, a Room over the Green Chamber, a Room over the Nursery, another Chamber, and an Upper Gallery. As well as the Kitchen, there was a Brewhouse, a Pantry, a further 'house' name unknown, and a well Larder. The outhouses consisted of two stables, a Granary, and a Barn incorporating a Servants Chamber. The items of gracious living detailed in the inventory such as pictures, virginals, maps, a clock and a watch, and the mirrors, glasses and silver plate, linens and comfortable beds, chairs and stools, all reflect a well-to-do lifestyle. This is the only Bowdon inventory examined so far that shows white metal or Ticknall ware in the description 'severall whyte plates'; and also "one pewter still", which may indicate that Mistress Tipping distilled a form of spirits then commonly called aquavite and, possibly, even strong cordials or medicinal potions from herbs and flowers. It is interesting that in the Upper Room over the Gray Chamber, a principal bedroom, the servant's truckle bed with its cords, which in the daytime was kept under the master's canopied bed, is listed. The cords were a primitive form of improved comfort from bare boards, and had to be tightened each night before the mattress was placed upon the bed, hence the common expression 'sleep tight'. (A nearby reconstruction shows this in the 17th century bedroom at Tatton Old Hall).

The style of Robert Tipping's house is very apparent in the furnishing detail, and there is a sense of order in the appropriateness of the contents of each room, not always found in 17th century houses. Pictures, possibly some were portraits, must have been a source of pleasure in this home, as there were over 31 of them listed. Robert had an interest in maps, two in the Hall and another large one in the Gallery, and also in geography, evident from his friend James Watmough's bequest to him. One wonders, too, whether Mistress Alice and her daughter played on the virginals and how often the family and guests were entertained with music and songs in this well- furnished and comfortable home.

Other items of interest were "a fouleing peece, a Birding peece, a little pistoll, a Muskett with Bandalions & a holberd", and the sums of £27. 3. 0 d. in "Plate & ready money in ye house" and £5 in gold, considerable amounts in those days. The last item, "ye deceds apparell" valued at £40, shows that his assessors were impressed with the quality (and quantity perhaps) of the rich clothing they saw, far surpassing that of most local gentlemen and yeomen. Robert Tipping probably had a flair for dress and may have felt his position as Steward required him to emulate his master at Dunham Hall. In any case, the way people dressed indicated their social standing, as it did within living memory, and he may have had to wear some form of livery, especially at Dunham Hall. The figure of £40 for this one item was a greater sum than the entire assessments for some yeomen's goods and chattels. Four years after his death, his widow Alice and the daughter Elizabeth, received a bequest in the will of her nephew, Robert Massey, son of Richard Massey, Esq. of Sale Old Hall and Barbara Gleave, dated 24 February 1666/7, "to my Aunt Alice Tipping and to her daughter Elizabeth five shillings apeece to buy them gloves". Alice went on living at the old Hall at Bowdon until at least 1674, and the next year Bowdon Parish Registers record the burial of "Elizabeth daughter of mis: Ales Tipping of Bowdon march the 2th" 1674/5.

To be continued



Sir George Booth (1622-1684),
later 1st Lord Delamer.

Note

Readers may be interested to note that the subject of this article is dealt with in much greater detail in *Bowdon Hall* published by Bowdon History Society.