

The Bowdon Sheaf

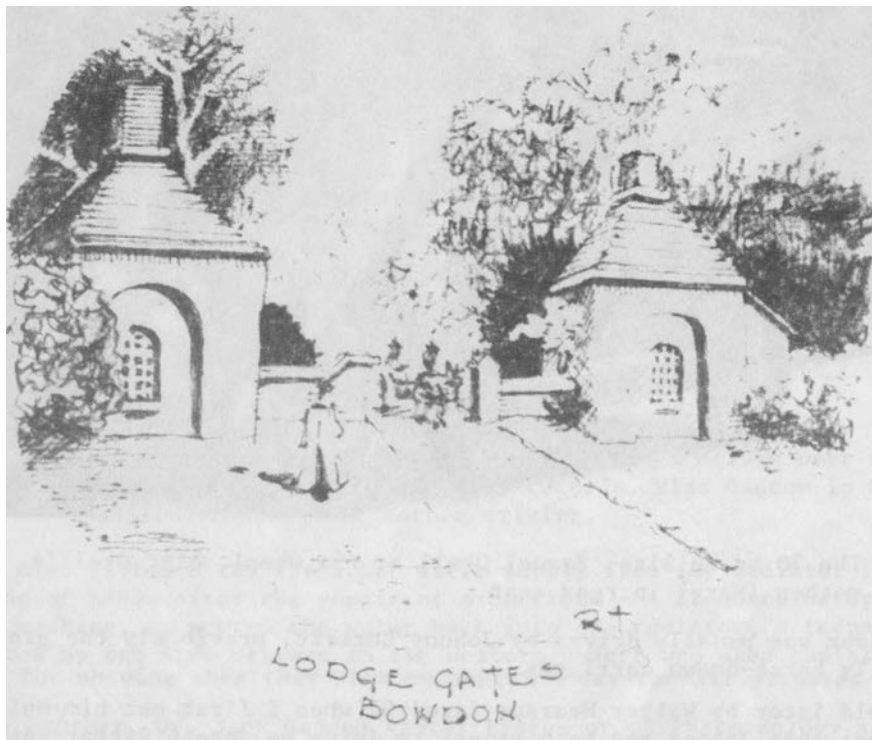
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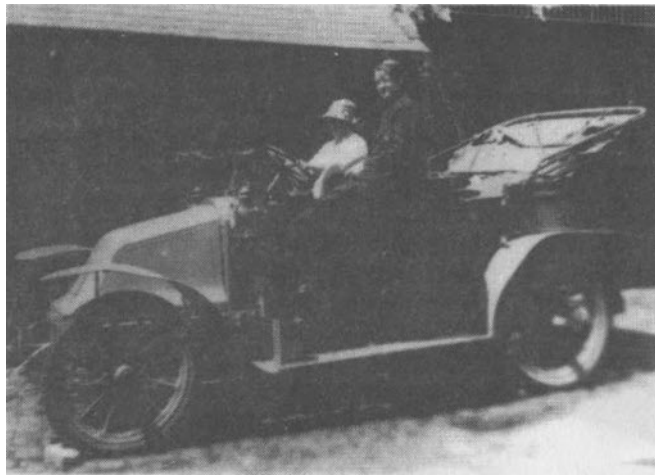
The lodge gates on Dunham Road, Bowdon, demolished by a land mine in 1940, were originally the main entrance to Dunham Massey Hall and bore a resemblance to the existing lodges at Tabley House, Knutsford.

Miss Gaddum's mother had two step-brothers, Will and Ralph (the latter known in the family as Ray) Joynson. Will Joynson went over to Ireland before the 1914/18 war to buy some polo ponies and the vendor 'threw in' a 1908 Renault motor car which he brought back to Bowdon with him.

Joan Gaddum's mother loved to drive this car and all her family were taught to drive in it. Before they had taken possession of it, the log book showed it had been driven over the Khyber Pass. It was equipped with a 'Stepney Wheel' (a device now commonly known as 'the spare'), an acetylene headlight, oil sidelights and rear light. There were no doors, however.

Later Miss Gaddum's brother Peter also acquired a 1906/7 Renault with doors and windscreen and mounted on it a mechanical windscreen wiper of his own design powered by a child's windmill toy.

I can myself, remember treating the external face of the windscreen in rain with soap or a sliced potato. (This is still a good tip in the event of failure of the now legally required double windscreen wipers and washers in freezing conditions. I am told the technique is still often used by explorers and NATO military drivers taking part in Arctic exercises, when all modern technology fails, as apparently it still does).



The Gaddums' 1908 Renault, which had been driven over the Khyber Pass, according to its records. Miss Gaddum in the passenger seat, her mother driving.

Peter also fitted a tap for a hot water supply from the radiator for the washing of hands after the repair of a puncture - a frequent occurrence. After washing, one poured the water back into the radiator, a technique repeated by 8th Army drivers in the Western Desert who used radiator hot water for shaving when they were on a-pint-a-day-for-all purposes ration. Joan's brother, Dr. Jack Gaddum (later Professor of Pharmacology and knighted) also had a pre-war Renault, from which the radiator cap was missing. He improvised by fitting a large laboratory cork with two holes drilled in it, but on occasion was heard to shout: "Look out. It's going to boil." When it did, all of them received a hot water shower.

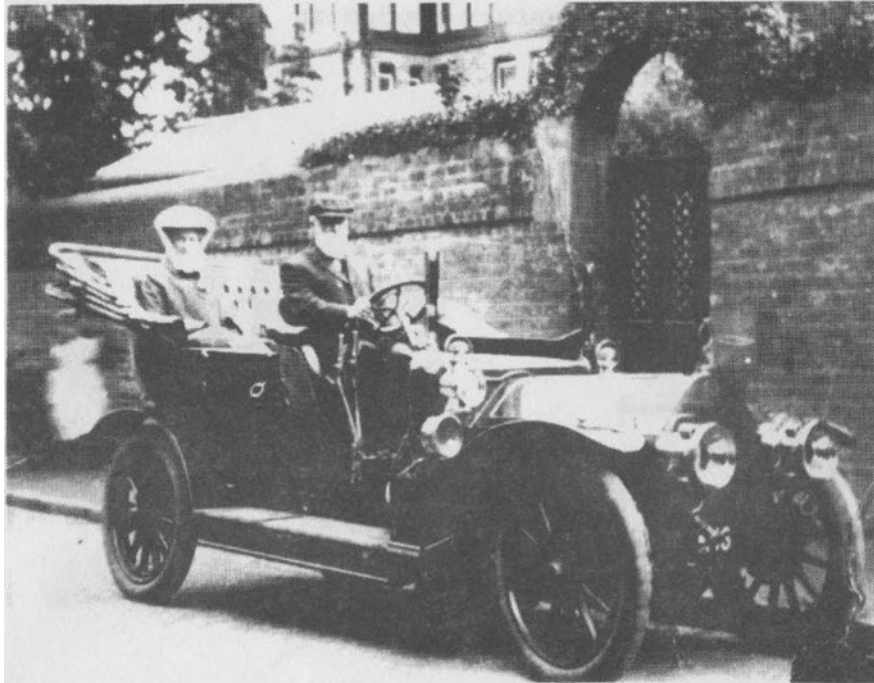
EARLY MOTOR CARS IN BOWDON: 2

by Alec Okell

After compiling details of his father's early motor cars (published in the last issue of *The Sheaf*) Alec Okell realised he knew comparatively little about other early vehicles in the district and started to research among contacts he had in local garages and other places.

Among his early sources of information was Miss Joan Gaddum of Braeside, Hall Road, Bowdon, whose grandfather Henry Theodore Gaddum, had built 'Oakley' in Green Walk, Bowdon and who had had the first telephone installed in the Altrincham area with the number 'Altrincham 1'.

Alec goes on to write: Henry Theodore Gaddum died in 1905 but his widow, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaddum bought and registered as M 2420 on 15th July 1909 an Austin 18/24 hp Landalette (with opening rear roof section) which was painted green, the most fashionable colour of the time for motorcars.



The 30 hp Belsize, Samuel Okell at the wheel. Alec Okell's mother (Mary) in rear seat.

Mrs. Gaddum was usually driven by Johnny Lockett, previously the groom of the family horse-drawn carriages.

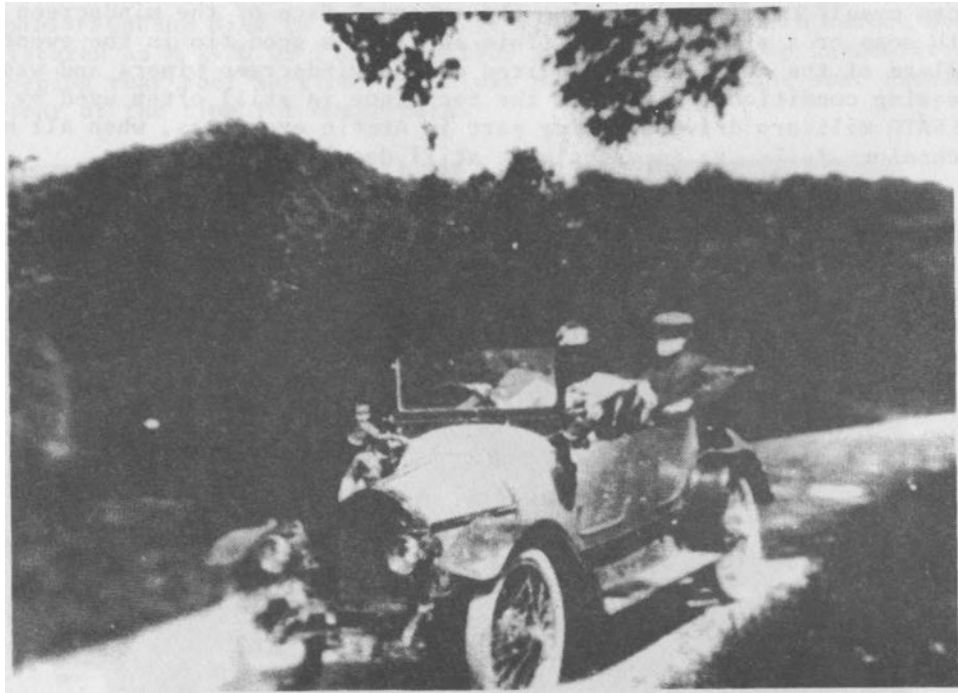
I was told later by Walter Hearsom (aged 97 when I first met him only three years ago) that Johnny had been taught to drive by Joseph Richardson of Unity Buildings, Market Street, Altrincham and later of Unity Garage, Dunham Road, but that Johnny had never really mastered the art of changing gear.

However Johnny Lockett remained Mrs. Gaddum's chauffeur and with him driving she often used to visit her son Harry, with his family, at the Priory, Bowdon.

Alec Okell has compiled records of many early cars registered in Cheshire, and particularly in Bowdon.

His references include a list of 70 cars and motorcycles registered from 14th December, 1903 - this being the first date for the compulsory registration of cars in the County of Cheshire.

His records include the registrations of four cars owned by the Duke of Westminster: of perhaps the first steam wagon made by Fodens of Sandbach, and of a 10 hp motor car (M 612) owned by Mr. Frederick Henry Royce of Knutsford, who later joined forces with the Honorable C. S. Rolls to create history.



The light 'Fafnir', believed to be of German origin, which was Samuel Okell's fifth car. Alec's mother driving, apparently with panache, father adopting a relaxed attitude, perhaps for the benefit of the photographer.

(Readers of the Bowdon Sheaf with an interest in photography may have been interested in the clarity of some of the prints accompanying Alec Okell's articles. His father, Samuel, was not only a pioneer of motor cars but a keen photographer as well. The prints have been restored from a collection of his original glass negatives).

RURAL BOWDON: 3 by Ronald Trenbath

Earlier this century there was a marked difference between the dress of countrymen and that of townspeople, and there are many still living who can remember local farmers in working dress which consisted of voluminous breeches made from strong "Drills, Bedfords, Whipcords, Tweeds or Corduroys, to measure at 10/6d (52p) post free" purchased through the post from Hebden Cord Co, and worn with leather gaiters, strong leather boots, waistcoats and shirts with detachable hard collars but no ties.

For more auspicious occasions, such as visits to the cattle auction, they would often wear well-cut breeches with matching jackets and caps from Speachleys in Market Street, Altrincham. Farm workers, on the other hand, wore corduroy trousers purchased from Bradleys, tied at the knee with twine, and at milking time khaki-coloured milking slops were often used as a matter of hygiene.



Saturday evenings, one is told, were a sight to be seen when the men put on their best Sunday suits to take their girlfriends dancing at the Stamford Arms, or the annual Harvest Home Supper at the Egerton Hall, Rostherne when, no matter what the time of the year, they always managed to wear button-holes in their lapels.

Entertainment at this time would probably seem most unsophisticated to most of us today, but with very long working hours, no holidays, poor communications and very insular environments, the whole concept of leisure was different from the idea of people now. Work, though physically more arduous, was less stressful and many rural workers grew up content with a life where the division between work and leisure was far less distinct than it is now, and a casual discussion with a neighbour during the course of the day could fulfil the requirements of social intercourse which produced the strong and interesting sub-cultures found in rural areas in the past.

Some men joined the Cheshire Yeomanry in order to get a respite in a different part of the county once a year, but otherwise people in rural communities rarely travelled beyond their local towns, and so it would be with very great enthusiasm that a circus would be welcomed when it camped at Bow Green, or a Fair when it arrived in Altrincham, and events such as the Hunt, the Races and the Wakes were almost sacrosanct in the county calendar. Altrincham provided entertainment through its many public houses, the Electric Kinema and the Hippodrome Theatre (now Studio One), which presented repertory and music hall. One farmer in Bow Green would always return early from the fields on a Saturday afternoon, saying that he was "going howt and 'aving a hearty tea" prior to a night in town, as it was known then. The village Wakes were a very old institution in Cheshire, with religious connections involving cleaning grave stones, tidying churchyards and laying fresh flowers prior to more festive activities including cock fighting, bear baiting, wrestling, archery and chasing slippery pigs, followed by the roasting of an ox.

Bowdon Wakes Races were particularly exciting, and the one in 1837 lasted for three days with a wheelbarrow race for 5/- (25p) by lads of all ages, hen racing, hurdle racing, a foot race for women, and a grinning competition. Barley hump, a hard-baked barley bread, was given at Dunham Hall to all children competing in a race to the Hall from the school, and the highly-potent Dunham ale was given to all comers, but over indulgence could lead to the culprit spending an entire market day in the stocks in Altrincham. A photograph in the archives of the former local authority showed P. Weazle, a small, impish character in a tall hat, employed in the Pig Market, who won the prize for grinning through a horse collar at one of the Bowdon Wakes. Racing was a very popular sport in Bowdon, as it is still in most of Cheshire, and an Earl of Stamford in the nineteenth century presented a Cavalry Cup for a race open to horses owned by NCOs and Privates in the Dunham Massey Squadron at Chester, and another race, the Hunter Stakes, was open to horses hunted in the Cheshire Hounds or Trafford Harriers. At the Meeting on Friday 29th September, 1843, the Dunham Massey Stakes of "three sovereigns each with fifteen sovereigns added, for horses of all denominations" to start at the "Bowdon turn and go twice round" and requiring an Entrance of 10/- (50p) was run with four entries, although "Mr. Hollingshead's br. m. 'Maragret' aged yellow and blue sleeves" appears to have been scratched.

The Altrincham Stakes were also run on that day for the same prize money but were "over hurdles not less than 3ft 6ins high (1.066m) with heats three times round and a distance" for an Entrance of 5/- (25p) in which five horses were entered but "Mr Atkinson's b.m. 'Lady of the Lake', orange and blue" also appears to have been scratched. The race card noted that the Ladies Purse of five sovereigns was "added to a Handicap Sweepstake of one sovereign each, for the beaten horses at this meeting, to name after the heat for the Dunham Massey Stakes. Heats twice round and a distance. Entrance 5/- three to start or the money added would not be given".

No doubt these races attracted large attendances from the local gentry and their guests in their four-in-hands and coaches, local merchants, farmers, farm hands, bookies, vendors, race-card sellers, pedlars, entertainers, sharpers and vagrants. Farm lorries were often drawn up beside the course for use as viewing platforms by the families and friends of the farmers who owned them, and the judges' coach would be stationed in a prominent position to view all the course.

A rider in his coloured tunic and cap would not take the jumps leaning forwards, as one would do today, but bolt upright with right arm raised in a stiff, unnatural position.

The venue for these races is often in dispute, Racefield near St. Margaret's Church is one obvious place, and it is known that most of the principal races of the district were run at Hale Moss, but it might be thought that the other races might be run in different places each year according to the availability of the fields, as often happens with point-to-points today. Although local racing ceased many years ago it is felt, by many local inhabitants, that it was revived in spirit when the Cheshire Forest Hunt recently transferred the point-to-point to Tatton.

AN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY BOWDONIAN **by Myra Kendrick**

Miss Mary Howes Smith lived at 2 Sunny Bank, Stamford Road, from about 1913 until her death in December 1950.

She came to Bowdon about 1910 to be first headmistress of the newly formed County High School for Girls (now the Girls' Grammar School). Where she lived on arrival we do not know, but she apparently rented 2 Sunny Bank before becoming its owner in 1921. With her lived her housekeeper Eliza and her Sealyham dog Toby. Eliza controlled her mistress's household affairs firmly and had considerable influence over her. She was heard to say authoritatively to the headmistress, who was recovering from an illness: "Get out of that draught, Miss Howes Smith!" and "H.S." meekly obeyed, though by no means a meek character.

She came to Bowdon from London at about the age of forty, but was born at sea off the coasts of Nova Scotia, where her father, a colonel in the Royal Engineers, was posted. For this reason she claimed to have no nationality. Smith being a not uncommon name, she adopted her second name, Howes, as part of her professional title.

After schooling at Sutton High School in the 1880s and 90s a gap in her known career was perhaps accounted for by family responsibilities, for she entered Newnham College, Cambridge, at the late age of twenty-nine. In 1903 she gained her Historical Tripos, but being a woman, was not admitted to a degree until 1948, when the ban on feminine graduation at Cambridge was removed. This explains why on the High School notice board in Cavendish Road she used the degree M.A., Trinity College, Dublin, for which degree she would have to pay on giving evidence of qualification.

After seven years of teaching and lecturing in London, she came to Bowdon a highly experienced woman, equipped to shape and form the new County High School. As the school in its early years had a preparatory department admitting little boys as well as girls, her local influence was widespread. An unusual feature of Miss Howes Smith's career was her appointment, during her London years, to be History and English tutor to King George V's only daughter, Princess Mary, later the Princess Royal. This continued into the Bowdon years, as after her coming north, classes for the princess and her friends were arranged for Saturdays and Miss Howes Smith travelled from Bowdon to London each weekend until this task was completed.

So it was that the Princess Royal came to Bowdon. Learning that on a visit to Chester, her former governess, with whom she still corresponded, would be within easy reach, she asked to see the school. For many girls and some small boys this was an unforgettable occasion. The Princess spent the night at Dunham Massey Hall, where Miss Howes Smith was a dinner guest, too - not for the first time, as her lively and charming personality made her welcome. Miss Howes Smith was very much part of the Bowdon community. She was a devoted worshipper at the Parish Church. From the inception of the League of Nations Union she was an enthusiastic supporter and instilled a similar enthusiasm into some at least of her pupils. She was also a member of the Sixty Club. Her local friends included the Johnson sisters, Lorna and Gladys, from the Firs: the Johnson Prizes awarded at the High School were in memory of Lorna.

Among Miss Howes Smith's local activities was membership of the Copec Housing Committee, which sought to provide good housing in Bowdon Vale at reasonable rents. Of this committee Mr. Charles Syers was secretary; Mr. F.B. Dunkerley, the honorary architect of the Vale houses, and Mr. G. Faulkner Armitage, were fellow members, and it was chaired by Mr. J. Goodier Haworth. The project comprised sixteen houses, still to be seen; application for tenancy soon greatly exceeded availability.

After retiring from her headship in 1933, Miss Howes Smith lived on at Sunny Bank for another seventeen years. Her love of the school and the neighbourhood kept her there: then the threat of the second world war provided another motive. She felt she must keep a refuge in case of invasion for a sister living in the south.

So at the beginning of the postwar era, this lively, intelligent woman with her floating garments, pince-nez on a chain, long links of beads and her keen interest in people, was still part of the Bowdon scene.



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