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Contents

Francis Crossley of Bowdon; the St Francis of Ancoats, by Chris Hill.

Bowdon or Bowden by Marjorie Cox.

The 6th Earl of Stamford & the Polish Exile by Marjorie Cox.

Mr Royce in Bowdon by Ronald Trenbath.



*Head Gamekeeper's House;
Bow Green in early 19th Century.*

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Francis Crossley of Bowdon: the St Francis of Ancoats by Chris Hill

Francis Crossley has been likened in spirit to Francis of Assisi in following a truly Christian life. He was unworldly, faithful to his conscience, and unstintingly liberal. The example he gave, served as an inspiration to many to do their own Christian duty. His business was making gas engines (of which two good, working examples are on public display at a pumping station in Norwich). He spent the mornings at the Works, in Manchester, and the evenings trying to bring "wanderers" back to the Good Shepherd, and in both serving and in working, his efforts were directed to the greater Glory of God.

The Crossleys lived in a mansion, "Fairlie", just inside the Bowdon boundary, at the corner of Cavendish Road (then known as Warrington Road), and Catherine Road (all names connected with the Stamford family). The house lies opposite the Altrincham Girls Grammar School, which has converted it to an annexe, doubling its size. The house had a large garden, and even now it still retains its spaciousness, with substantial shrubberies and mature specimen trees, such as, a Himalayan, Indian Cedar. The house was part of a development by Lord Stamford to create an estate of large mansions for prosperous business men and merchants, following the building of St. Margaret's church and the subsequent formation of a new parish. During the period when the house was built, the difference between rich and poor was very marked, which led those people with social consciences to try to bring about reforms to aid the conditions of the poor. Frank Crossley and his wife were two such people.

It should be emphasised at this point, that in this advanced period of the Industrial Revolution, the 1870's., cities like Manchester had been flooded with people seeking better conditions from the countryside. The long association between feudal Lord and his care for those he was responsible for, had been broken and had, in industry, been replaced by the tradesman's personal obligation to his craft. This in a sense, although engendering a feeling of personal satisfaction for a job well done, resulted in a loss by the worker of his duty to a master and similarly, also resulted in the employer who had replaced the feudal master, feeling little paternalistic responsibility for the living conditions of his numerous work-force in the factory system. The Church also played its part. Before the rise in Nonconformism, the over-riding responsibility of all men was seen to be the salvation of their souls; be they rich or poor, the only thing which really mattered was Salvation. The new philosophies generated by such sectarian religions as Wesleyanism and Unitarianism, which flourished well in the Manchester area, fostered attitudes which promoted the social values of industry, thrift, a striving for success and betterment together with an element of self-interest, based it seems on the premise that looking after oneself and immediate family somehow resulted in a betterment of society as a whole, from which the working classes would also gain some benefit.

The idea of self help was encouraged by that section of the Victorian society which charitably supported prudential habits in the working classes. The Crossleys were members of Maclaren's Congregational church in Manchester and Mackennal's Bowdon Downs church. Many people who were in administrative positions or of influence, supported philanthropic or Christian charity, and other members of the Downs church, e.g. Arthur (later Sir) Haworth (Lady Haworth gave money for the building of Oldfield Congregational Church), William O'Hanlon and T.A. Coward, the naturalist, gave not only money, but time and effort to mission and social work in the slums of Manchester, but it was the examples of men such as Frank Crossley and Hewlett Johnson, who stood out from the rest in the limits they were prepared to go to, in putting their altruistic ideals into effect, improving the social conditions for the working class and the poor.

Not only did this responsibility require a lot of energy and effort from them, but their revolutionary campaigning had to overcome the *laissez-faire* attitudes of their own social class towards the conditions created by the Industrial Revolution. Such an overturning of accepted thinking required outstanding efforts by these campaigners in order to have any effect and in the end it was the catalytic examples they gave to others, as much as their own achievements, that nurtured a more enlightened attitude, which began to change the social conditions. To demonstrate Crossley's stance which differentiated him from his fellow Congregationalists, he once spoke as a deacon at a Church Meeting at the Downs church of hating the Bowdon others loved, and urged "Let us leave this respectable place and go right down among the poor folks. That is where a church should be."

Frank Crossley is thought to have learnt his trade under Robert Stephenson in Newcastle and thereafter purchased a small business in Great Marlborough Street, Openshaw, Manchester, from a Mr. Dunlop who produced India-rubber machinery. His brother William later joined him, but they struggled to keep the business going. In 1876, the German patents of the Otto gas engine were on the market, and the two brothers saw their opportunity. They understood the value of the patents, and guessed the potential of a small engine which could replace steam where low horse-power engines were required. Frank was able to greatly improve the original design of Dr. Otto. From this venture they were able to lay the foundation for a successful business which made the name of Crossley famous throughout the world and in doing so, created the brothers very wealthy captains of industry.

Fairlie became a centre of religious influence at which many schemes for the social and religious regeneration of Manchester were hatched. His wife supported him completely in his work in that direction having become a keen Salvationist and General Booth and his wife were frequent visitors, (the Crossley's having donated a vast sum of money to the Salvationists' cause).

For some years, Frank had been closely engaged with his brother, Hastings, in a mission attached to their works in Openshaw, but eventually Frank decided on another project and had an old music-hall in Ancoats, known as "The Star", pulled down and a mission hall costing over £20,000, erected. Ancoats was renowned as the worst slum area of Manchester, so that any influence the Mission had there, would do the greatest good. This contained an attractive hall for meetings, bath-rooms and coffee-rooms, etc., for the outward needs of the local population. The original idea was to put the running of the mission in the hands of the Salvation Army, but on nearing completion, the Crossley's tried to run the mission from home, however, overseeing the building programme was one thing, the day to day running of the hostel needed much closer control. The first meeting to be held in the new hall was at 7.00 a.m., on August 4th, 1889, and the address of the establishment was; Star Buildings, Pollard Street, Ancoats.

From its opening, the Mission prospered but it did not take long for the Crossley's to realise that the running of the mission was not possible from distant Bowdon and so they therefore moved to Ancoats in November that year, sending their pictures to the Whitworth Gallery (Frank had been a great lover of art and had given to the Bowdon Downs church a huge plaster cast of Italian Renaissance sculpture designed by Delia Robbia for the singing galleries of Florence Cathedral), Francis Crossley thereby fulfilled his ideals, quoted above. This was a move against the tide, as the trend for some time had been for the more prosperous merchants and business men to move their families away from the Town, thereby to some extent, giving up their involvement in the running of the city and their pride in its development To salve their consciences for neglecting the town and its people, the owners and directors of businesses, involved themselves in serving, or contributing to, charities, as a way of improving the social conditions of the inhabitants.

The Crossley family consisted of five children, Helen K., born 1872, Richard F., born 1873, Alan Hastings, born 1878, Erskin Alick, born 1880, and Francis Marshall, born 1884. When Frank's brother and business partner, William, received the freedom of the City of Manchester, he gave tribute to Frank in his speech saying:- "I came to Manchester in 1867, to commence business with my late brother, F.W. Crossley. With him I had the satisfaction after a few years of adversity, of introducing to Manchester - I might almost say to England - a new trade which in a short time became so considerable that we were able to help forward some of the religious and philanthropic efforts so dear to our hearts. I speak in the plural, because without my brother's splendid lead and example I doubt whether I could have done very much, and because I feel that in presenting me with this great honour you have his work and noble life before your minds, and my pleasure in receiving it is increased by the thought that his memory is associated with it. To give money only becomes a great gift when self-denial is necessary to make the giving possible; but to give ones-self, as he did, is the greatest thing a man can do." A fitting tribute to Bowdon's greatest philanthropist.

Further reading:-

'Frank Crossley - Saint or Sinner ?' by Edward Mynott, Manchester Region History Review, 1997, Vol. XI.

'Life and Letters of Francis William Crossley' by J. Rendel Harris.

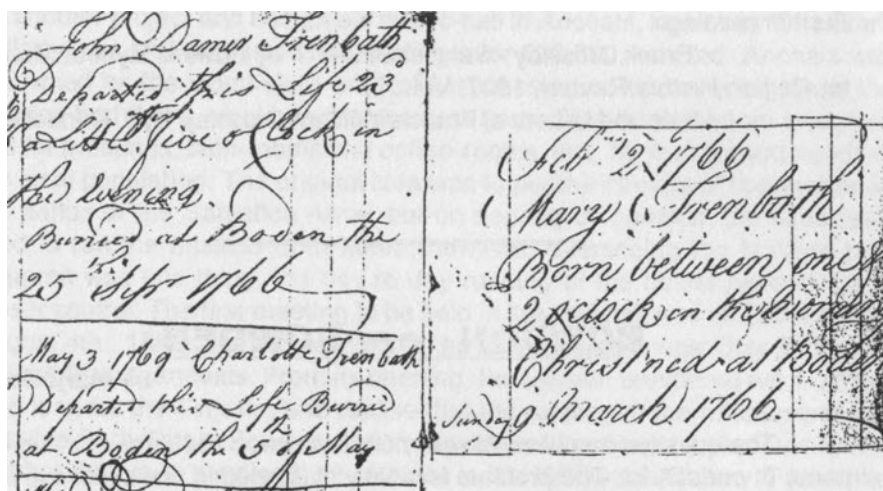
BOWDON or BOWDEN
by Marjorie Cox

The question has been raised more than once about the spelling of the name of our district. The problem is vividly illustrated in two consecutive editions of the telephone directory. I myself was baffled in 1997, when, in trying to look up the number of our local Post Office, I sought it in the March 1997 Phone Book under the spelling local people use - Bowdon, and failed to find it; to my surprise, it was under Bowden Post Office. However, in the September, 1998 edition of the Phone Book it appears as Bowdon Post Office. Similarly, what used to be the Assembly Rooms appear in 1997 as the Bowden Rooms and in 1998 as the Bowdon Rooms.

Detailed discussion of usage over the centuries must wait for a later occasion, but I recently came across a thought-provoking piece of evidence in the Dunham Massey Papers, deposited by The National Trust in the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester. This showed that the problem and the indecision are not new. Among the Estate Records are two identical volumes of Parish Rentals (EGR 14/6/1/8 and /9) of the early nineteenth century; each volume has a red leather, gilt-tooled label on the front, though the lettering and the tooling are not absolutely identical. The volume which covers 1803 to 1815 is entitled 'Bowden Parish Rental' and that covering 1816 to 1828, 'Bowdon Parish Rental'.

I hope future issues of The Bowdon Sheaf will explore this matter further: readers' examples, drawn from different periods, will be very welcome.

The following extracts from a family archive indicate the spelling of Bowdon in the 18th century:-



The 6th Earl of Stamford and the Polish exile by Marjorie Cox

In an article in *The Bowdon Sheaf* No. 19, I traced a link between the hero of the Hungarian revolution of 1848, Louis Kossuth, and the new radical men of wealth and influence in Manchester and Bowdon. Some years before that, however, there is a link between an earlier attempted revolution, that in Poland in 1830, and the 6th Earl of Stamford (1765-1845). By that date Poland, partitioned between Russia, Austria and Prussia, had lost its independent identity, a loss which the Poles refused to accept. There were several insurrections, the most serious in 1830 and 1863, which resulted in loss of life or in exile in Russia; among the exiles after the 1863 rising were the grandfather of Shostakovich and the father of Joseph Conrad.

The intensity of Polish feeling against Tsarist Russia after the crushing of the 1830 insurrection is demonstrated by an entry in Chopin's diary in 1831, on hearing of the fall of Warsaw: "OH GOD, Thou art! Thou art and avengest Thyself not! Thou hast still not enough of the Muscovite crimes, or Thou art Thyself a Muscovite."

One of the consequences of the failed risings and the state of Poland was large-scale emigration by Poles throughout Europe and the New World. One such unhappy exile after the 1830 rising ended his life in Chester and was helped by the 6th Earl of Stamford. The Cheshire Sheaf in 1913 (3rd Series, Vol. X) recorded a touching epitaph on a tombstone resting against the west end of the now demolished church of St. Martin in Chester.

**NEAR
THIS PLACE LIES
JEAN KOUSKI
A POLISH GENTLEMAN
LIEUTENANT IN THE CHASSEURS,
DRIVEN FROM HIS NATIVE COUNTRY ,
HE SOUGHT REFUGE IN ENGLAND,
SINKING UNDER ILLNESS
THE CONSEQUENCE OF WANT
AND SUFFERING, HE WAS
RECEIVED INTO THE INFIRMARY
OF THIS CITY, HAVING LOST
EVERY EARTHLY GOOD
HE FOUND PEACE WITH GOD
THROUGH JESUS CHRIST
.....HOPE
ER (17th?) 1836**

Weathering meant that little of the last few lines was legible, but the Burial Register showed that John Kouskie, a native of Poland, died at the City Infirmary and was buried on 23rd December, 1836, aged 27.

A later note in The Cheshire Sheaf (p.35) cited an entry in the Minute Book of Chester Infirmary for the week beginning 25th October, 1836, which recorded that "John Cofsthey" (the name obviously caused difficulty) was admitted to the Infirmary on the recommendation of Mr. Bagnall for Lord Stamford. The In Patients' Register showed that the patient, "Cofsky", was suffering from dropsy and jaundice and died on 15th December; he had been in hospital for 49 days.

It is a sad little tale, only redeemed by Lord Stamford's intervention. It calls to mind the action of a later Lord Stamford, the 10th and last Earl, described by Belinda Cousens in her "Dunham Massey: An Illustrated Souvenir". In 1938, the 10th Earl, a great supporter of the League of Nations, offered sanctuary to Haile Selassie, Emperor of Ethiopia during his exile in England.

Mr Royce in Bowdon
by Ronald Trenbath

In the early days of motoring drivers were obliged to observe the speed- limit of a walking pace, necessitating a pedestrian, with a red flag, walking in front of a moving vehicle to force it into conforming with the requirement. This regulation was replaced by another one which allowed motorists to travel at a slightly greater speed with penalties for those who exceeded the new limit.

In order to enforce this law police devised speed-traps whereby police constables concealed themselves in road side hedgerows, with a measured distance between two officers, when a motor car passed one of them he would signal to his colleague, who would then measure the time, on a stop watch, in which it took the vehicle to approach him & if it was less than a given length of time, the driver was judged to have exceeded the speed limit & would be dealt with accordingly.

At this time Mr. Royce, a partner in Rolls Royce Cars, lived in Knutsford & would often bring home prototype models of cars, at the weekends, to test them in the hills beyond Macclesfield & make any adjustment he thought necessary before returning with them to work on the following Mondays. He was however always keen to try his cars at speed & devised a way of doing so without being apprehended.

Cars travelling northward out of Knutsford passed a police station, near Canute Square, & the Sergeant in charge would telephone Altrincham Police giving car numbers & times of departure & they would then await their arrival, noting the times taken in relation to the measured distance travelled & decide if an offence had been committed.

Knowing this procedure Royce would travel out of Knutsford at a snails pace, sounding the car horn & waving to the police sergeant & then, when out of sight he would let the car out at full throttle until he arrived at the junction of Chester Road & Park Road, Bowdon where he turned right & proceeded to the top of Church Brow where he parked the car, next to the church, took out his pipe & tobacco pouch & would sit for a pleasant smoke & enjoy the view. When sufficient time had elapsed Royce would move the car on at snails pace, blowing the horn outside the Police Station & waving to the sergeant awaiting his arrival. The worked out speed would usually be calculated at about five miles per hour.

It was not long before other motorists devised ways of overcoming speed- traps & they took pleasure in entertaining fellow drivers with their exploits when they met, but Cheshire Police were not the country bumpkins, often described in popular literature of the day, & were well aware of what was happening, but no doubt they turned a blind eye on the matter until a more rational approach was taken on the subject.

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