

The Bowdon Sheaf

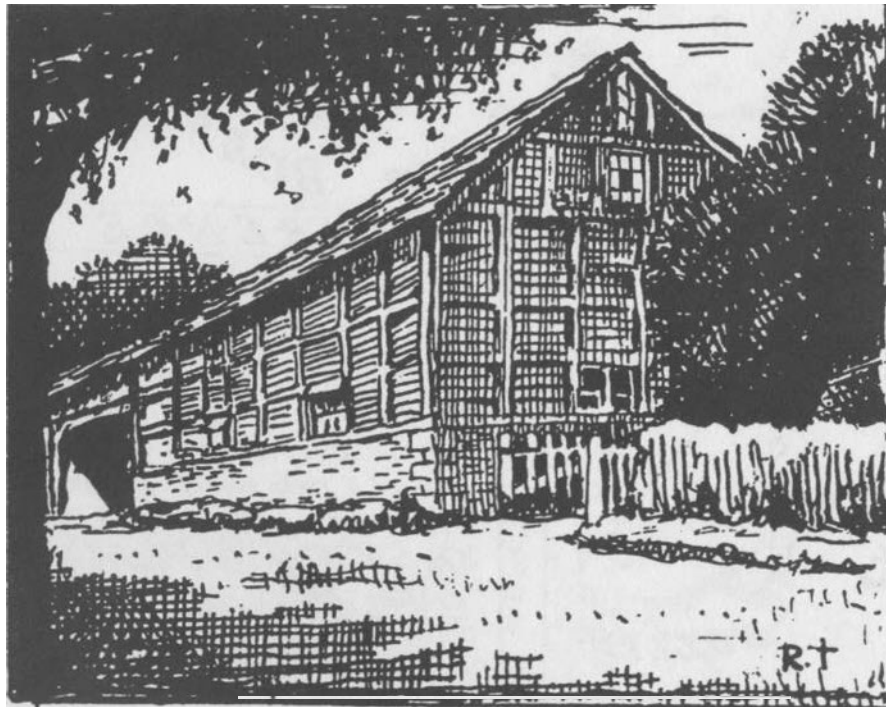
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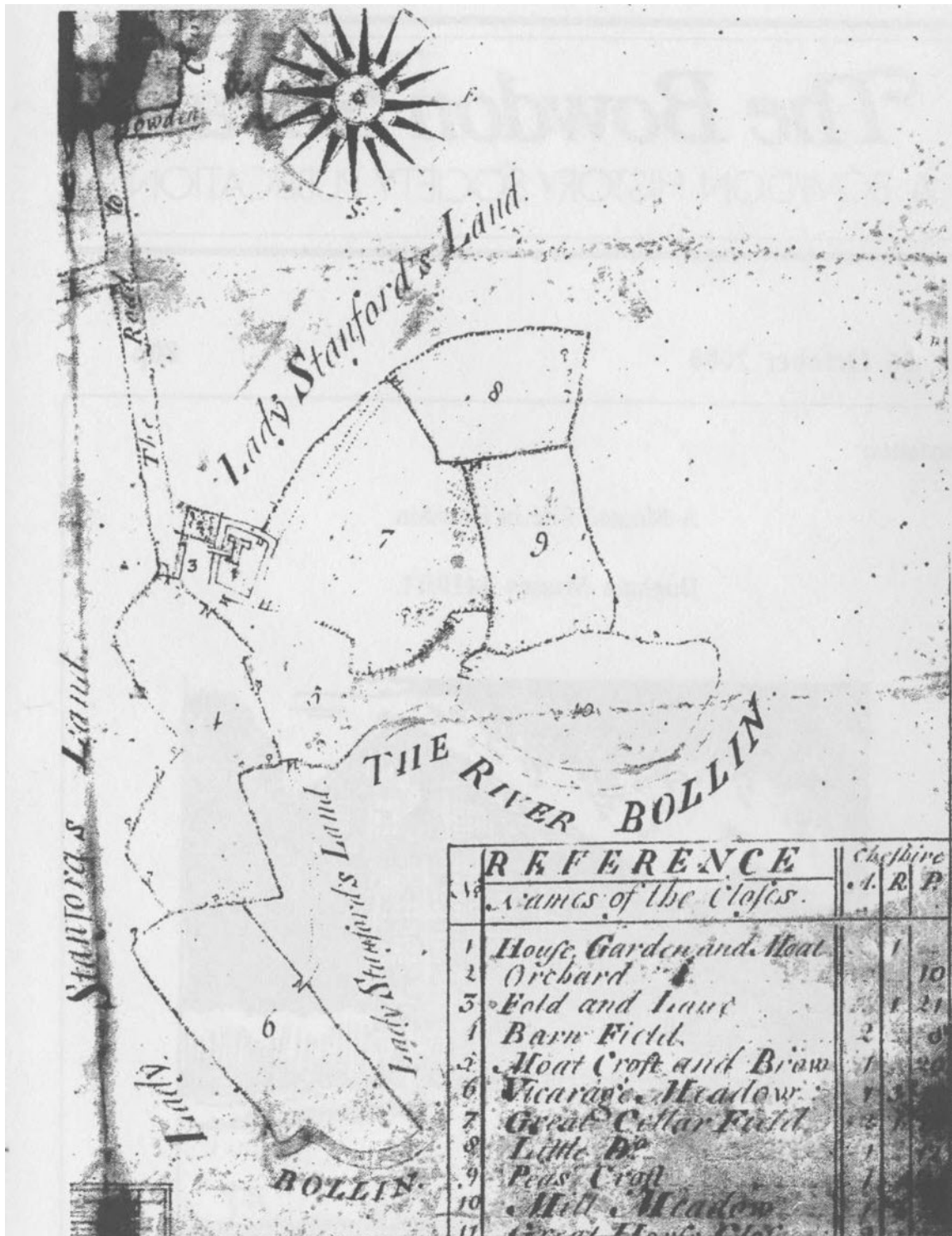
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Contents

A Moated Site in Bowdon.
Dunham Massey 1410-11.



THE BARN, ASHLEY HEATH



Bowdon Vicarage and those Glebe fields immediately surrounding it. Part of the Survey Map of 1772 of Bowdon Vicarage and its Glebe lands.

A Moated Site in Bowdon
New Light on the Old Vicarage
by Marjorie Cox

The old Vicarage of Bowdon was set among the fields down by the River Bollin. In 1150, the baronial lord, Hamo de Mascy of Dunham Massey, gave to his new monastic foundation, the Benedictine Priory of Birkenhead, half of his manor of Bowdon, a considerable amount of land, and in 1278, his descendant, Hamo V, gave the Priory the advowson or right to present to the living of Bowdon. A few years later, in 1284, the Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield (in whose diocese Bowdon then lay) in order to provide for the holder of the living, decided on a division of this land between the Priory and the Vicar. A small number of fields in Bowdon township was given to the Vicar and became the vicarial glebe, from the Latin 'gleba', a clod and so soil or land. In addition the Vicar was to have various parochial dues, together with the 'small tithes' - on farm animals, flax and hemp in the whole of the very large parish of Bowdon. Unusually, he was also given the tithe of hay (normally a 'great tithe') from all the parish except the township of Dunham Massey. The Priory retained the much larger share of the land as the 'rectorial glebe' and the much more profitable 'great tithes' on cereals, for which the Hale Tithe Barn was built later. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII, the Priory's land and tithes, together with the advowson, were given to the newly-created Bishopric of Chester. Ironically, from the early seventeenth century, the Bishops leased the land to the owners of Dunham Massey.



Detail of the Vicarage and Moat from the 1772 map.

The fields of the Vicar's glebe were described in the Bishop's allocation (the original in Latin) as 'all that land which once belonged to Richard, son of Hawys, next to the water of Bolyn, with all the buildings and with all the strips next to the said land, on a certain island called Greeneway';

'Greeneway' or 'Greeneye' is one of the oldest Bowdon field-names.

This vicarial glebe remained until 1863, when it was decided to build a new vicarage in Park Road, on a site and in a style more suited to a Bowdon, which had recently changed from an agricultural community to, predominantly, a prosperous 'dormitory' of Manchester. The old vicarage and some of the fields were sold to Josias Alexander, who re-named it The Priory', a name denounced in *The Place-Names of Cheshire* as 'pretentious antiquarianism', but, perhaps more kindly seen as Victorian historical romanticism, with a backward glance at Birkenhead Priory.

The vicarage house, which became The Priory, was not the first on the site, but a relatively late one of the end of the eighteenth century, and very little has, hitherto, been known about its predecessor. Many parishes have among their records Terriers, surveys of the incumbent's property, made at intervals for the Bishop. They can include, as do those of Ashton-under-Lyne, a living in the gift of the Booths and Greys of Dunham Massey, detailed descriptions of the parsonage house and other buildings, and of the lands. The Chester Diocesan Records contain only one Terrier for Bowdon and it is a sad disappointment, besides being damaged. It was made in July, 1728, by the Vicar, Peter Lancaster, but is mainly concerned with listing the Vicar's dues and tithes and those who paid them. There is scarcely a mention of the house, only that it 'is in good or better Repair than has been known (piece missing, ? in the memory) of Man'; as to the land and ground it was 'cultivated and improv'd'. The Vicar promised a full account 'when the Corn is reap'd', but no such full Terrier exists, if it was ever sent in. It is not surprising that John Baldwin, Vicar 1772-1815, replied to a Visitation query of 1804, that he had never seen any Terrier and none was to be found in the Registry at Chester, although he had been told by the late Parish Clerk that one had been 'deliver'd into that office' in the time of Peter Lancaster.

Until recently, the only description we have had of the earlier (not necessarily earliest) vicarage and its fields was in a detailed Survey and Valuation made by Commissioners in 1654, during the Interregnum. The purpose was to value church lands with a view to sale, following on their confiscation from church dignitaries, including the abolished Bishops, Deans and Chapters. The Vicar of Bowdon's property was included, although in 1647 it had been assigned to the new 'godlie and orthodox', i.e. Presbyterian, Vicar, James Watmough. The fields were given in the utmost detail and the vicarage was described as thatched, of three bayes, with a Garden place, a barne and stable, with the barne yard'. (For 'bay' construction see Bowdon Hall and its People, pp.51-3; several local gentlemen's houses had five bayes, see p.58.)

In the later eighteenth century only bare information about the house was given by the Vicar, John Baldwin, in his replies to Visitation queries. In 1778, the Vicarage was 'in good repair' and in 1789 'in very good repair'. In 1804, however, he reported that it was in good repair, adding 'as it is not many years since I was at a considerable expense in erecting a new one.' 'Not many years' is a rather vague phrase, difficult to interpret: could the 'in very good repair of 1789' indicate

a new building or should it be dated from only a few years before 1804? It is either very late eighteenth century or turn of the century. John Baldwin, presented to Bowdon by the Bishop on August 2nd, 1772, was a clergyman's son, baptised in Chester Cathedral, and a Cambridge graduate, LL B in 1771, of Trinity Hall. In 1794, while still holding Bowdon, valued at £140 per annum, he was made Perpetual Curate of St. Peter's, Chester, valued at £90 per annum, where previous clergy had been Baldwins.

New evidence about the earlier vicarage has just emerged in the Stamford Papers from Dunham Massey. A large number of maps and plans has recently been deposited by The National Trust in The John Rylands University Library of Manchester (Deansgate). No. 99 of these is 'A Map of the Vicarage and Glebe lands in Bowden and County of Chester belonging to the Reverend Mr. John Baldwin Surveyed September 1772 by John Earl'. The map is on vellum and the scale is 14 chains or 56 perches (Cheshire measure) to 5 inches. It has just been cleaned and made legible, but John Earl has not so far been identified. The Survey, made in the month after Baldwin's presentation, was presumably done to make a record, in the absence of a proper Terrier, of his fields, which were intermixed with those of Lady Stamford (spelt 'Stanford', suggesting the survey was by a stranger). The map, with the list of buildings and fields, contains a startling revelation. The first item in the list is 'House, garden and Moat' and the fifth is a field called 'Moat Croft and Brow', names not known from elsewhere. The map shows clearly an irregularly shaped quadrangular moat, with a bridge across it from the west to the house, whose shape is different from that on the Tithe Map of 1838.

This new evidence and its significance have to be viewed against the comprehensive survey and conclusions of David Wilson on 'Medieval Moated Sites in Cheshire' (Transactions Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. Vol.84, 1987) and the briefer account of moated sites in Trafford in Michael Nevell's *The Archaeology of Trafford* (1997), pp.48-9. Wilson showed that the number of moated sites found in Cheshire (none occupied by its proven original building) had steadily risen since 1960, and he estimated it at around two hundred, which he thought close to the medieval total. In Cheshire, they were predominantly on the Keuper Marl/boulder clay, which covers over half the 'historic' county. In such areas they tended to be one per township, and, for various reasons, usually manorial (including monastic manors and granges). As to the purpose and function of moats, he came down against drainage and water supply, though he was more neutral about fishponds. Rather than defence against major attack, he favoured feuding. Separate functions were as a sign of social standing or of the possession of more valuables, and also of following a fashion.

Bowden Vicarage is, for Cheshire, unusual in not being manorial, but it lies in a typical location, on low-lying clay land. There is also some evidence to suggest that in the fourteenth century it might have been glad of the security of a moat against feuding by branches of the Mascy family. R. Stewart Brown, the historian of Birkenhead Priory, describes what the Priory had to suffer at the hands of the Mascys of Hale, at one time holders of part of the manor of Bowdon and claimants to the advowson. In July, 1383, Thomas de Mascy with Hugh de Artunstall carried off the Priory's tithe com. In March, 1397, contesting the Prior's appointment of Richard del More as Vicar of Bowdon, several Mascys entered the vicarage and held it by force until Palm Sunday, threatening that neither the Prior nor the Vicar should draw any profit from the church until their candidate, a Mascy, was appointed. In April, 1397, the holy watur [sic] clerk' of Bowdon Church was assaulted by them. The Hale Mascys' effort failed, but in such circumstances, if a moat round the vicarage did not exist already it might well have been thought desirable. In general, moated sites are dated from the 12th to the 15th century, with a peak in the 13th, but Wilson stresses that the dating of the digging out of moats is very problematic. Those which have disappeared are even more difficult, and by 1804, when John Baldwin had built his new vicarage, the moat must have been filled in: there is no trace of it on the Tithe Map.

The moated site at the old vicarage in Bowdon should, primarily, take its place among the two hundred in the 'historic county' of Cheshire, but in the present state of local authority boundaries, it must also be seen in the context of Trafford. Nevell identifies eight certain or possible moated sites in Trafford, of which only three have positive evidence of a moat: these are Buttery House Farm in Davenport Green, Hale, and Riddings Hall and Timperley Hall both in Timperley, the first two of which he finds below manorial status. Positive evidence is hard to come by; it can be from aerial photography, archaeological field-work, field-names or documentation. The moated site at Bowdon's old vicarage, documented in 1772, with a map, is therefore an important addition to the small tally in Trafford and an addition to the total in the 'historic' county of Cheshire.

My warm thanks are due to Mr. John Hodgson of The John Rylands University Library of Manchester for much help.

I am also grateful to The National Trust for kind permission to reproduce a photograph of part of the map of Bowdon Vicarage and Glebe lands.

Chief Sources

Stamford Papers from Dunham Massey John Rylands University Library of Manchester.
Cheshire Record Office: Diocesan Records:

Survey Map No.99 of Bowden
Vicarage and Glebe lands 1772
Bowden Terrier, 6 July, 1728
EDV8/16;
Visitation Replies, 1778, 1789, 1804
EDV 7/1, 2, 3.
Baldwin & St. Peter's, EDP 44/6.

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Birkenhead Priory and the Vicarage of Bowdon, The Cheshire
Sheaf, iii, XVII, p.78.
- H. Fishwick (ed.) *Lancashire and Cheshire Church Surveys 1649-55*, Record
Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, I.
- David Wilson *The Medieval Moated Sites of Cheshire*, Transactions Lancashire
and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 84 (1987)
- Michael Nevell *Excavations of a Medieval Moated Site at Buttery House Lane*,
Transactions Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, 82.
Summarised in Hale and
Ashley: The Past 100 Years, p. 197.
The Archaeology of Trafford (1997)

Editors Note Readers might be reminded of Canon Ridgway's article *Fourteenth
Century Feuds in Bowdon*, Bowdon Sheaf No.20 (October 1992).

Description of the Manor of Dunham Massey from the Manorial Extent of 1410-11 in the time of John Legh of Bothes, tenant of the same place

At the same place is the site of the previously mentioned manor, surrounded by a moat. On the site is a hall with a high [i.e. first storey ?] chamber, with chapel and other small rooms adjacent, roofed with shingles; a screened passageway between kitchen and hall, roofed with boards and a granary roofed with thatch, and a gatehouse roofed with oak shingles; and certain buildings with foundations on the aforementioned site, which is worth nothing after deductions; in addition there is an orchard outside the moat which used to yield 2 shillings a year. The fields of the demesne have not been in the hands of the lord for very long time. In the time of the predecessors of the present lord they were leased in portions to various tenants and until now in the same way they remain in the hands of the lessees, whose names are appended (and the tenants are no longer aware of the rights of possession or where the boundaries lie for certain) as shown below. But there is at the same place a certain area of grass-land called Dunham Meadow, containing 9 1/2 acres with the value of 5 shillings per acre.

There is also a pond adjoining the moat around the hall which is not stocked and so it is worth nothing after deductions.

The above extract from the Stamford Estate papers at Rylands Library was transcribed by Mr. James Haworth of Sale and submitted for publication by Chris Hill.

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ERRATA

p.2 The following acknowledgements should appear under the photograph of the map:-
The National Trust, Stamford Papers, The John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

Reproduced by courtesy of the Director and Librarian of The John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

p.3 For 'Margorie' read 'Marjorie'.

p.5 line 38 After 'favoured' insert 'security against thieves and law-breakers in unsafe times, marked by family'.