

# *The Bowdon Sheaf*

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## **Seventeenth Century Burial Laws by Beryl Chartres**

In 1667 an Act of Parliament was passed for the encouragement of the woollen and paper manufacturers. It enacted that no corpse should be buried in 'shirt, sheet, shroud or shift' but in woollen, and an affidavit made within eight days of interment that the dead was not shrouded in linen. A penalty of £5 was incurred if the law was broken. These affidavits are regularly entered in the Bowdon Parish Register. No specific entry of the enforcement of the Act appears until June 1709, when there was Alice, wife of Thomas Warburton, of Hale, buried in linen contrary to Act of Parliament. He paid ye fine to ye churchwardens of Bowdon for ye use of ye poorer Not many years afterwards the fine of £5 was enforced in the case of Mary Leigh, widow, of Bowdon, buried in linen. £2.10s where of went to the poor. In 1728, Nicholas Waterhouse, of Bowdon, a dissenting teacher, 'was buried in linnen' but there is no note made as to whether any fine was enforced. This Act was not re-pealed until 1814, and then not without some opposition.

Ref: Ingham's *Cheshire*.

## **Publication of Marriage Banns during the Commonwealth Period by Beryl Chartres**

In 1653, during the Commonwealth period, there was a very stringent Act of Parliament passed requiring marriages to take place before a Justice of the Peace. The form usually adapted was: 'Publication of banns of marriage was made in our Parish church of Bowdon three several Lords days between John Yeates of Lime parish and Margaret Baxter of this parish, which days of publication were the 4th, the 11th and the 18th days of December in the year 1653, and were married the 23rd day of December within the same year before me, Peter Brookes, Esquire'.

The following contains the first reference to a trade which was the staple one in the district:- 'Publication of banns of marriage was made in our parish church of Bowdon three several Lords days betwixt Wm. Tippinge of Hale, woollin webster (woollen weaver) and Katheren Hall of Ashley, both of this parish of Bowdon and were married by me, Thomas Standley (Stanley) of Alderley, Esquire, one of the Justices of Peace of this County , on 6th day of February, 1653'.

Proclamation was in some instances made, generally by the bellman, at the cross in the market place. These proclamations usually read 'Publication of banns was made in the Altrincham Market, within our parish of Bowdon, three severall market days betwixt Edward Woodall of the parish of Ashton upon Mercey Bancke, and Anne Canington of this parish and were married the 16th day of September in the year of our Lord God 1654, before Tho. Brereton, Esquire.' Some of the entries state that publication was made between the hours of eleven and two in the market place, but this does not appear prior to the year 1656 to have been a popular method, as three quarters of the proclamations were made in 'our parish church'. In 1656 and 1657 the publications were, with few exceptions, made in the local market place 'at the close of the morning,' on 12 o'clock. In 1658 they were made in solitary instances, but they are solemnised by the Vicar, James Watmough.

Ref: Ingham's *Cheshire*.

### **BUCKLOW HUNDRED AND THE CATTLE PLAGUE. 1865-66** **by Stephen Matthews**

In 1865-66 British cattle herds were afflicted by an epidemic of Rinderpest, a viral infection for which there was no certain cure. The first cases were identified in the early summer of 1865 after diseased animals had been imported from the Baltic into Hull and then swiftly dispersed around the country by rail. It is probable that the importer had been pressured into accepting diseased cattle and that he used Hull because the import checks there were known to be slack.

The disease spread rapidly, though it did not reach Cheshire until early October 1865 and Bucklow Hundred until a month later. It then raged until early summer when mass slaughter brought it under control. Cheshire was hit harder than any other county both in absolute terms and in the percentage of beasts, losing 38% of its stock at a cost of nearly £1m. Nearly 94,000 animals were attacked (68%), of which about 80,000 died or were slaughtered. This compared with losses of 1.87% in Lancashire and 4.86% in Staffordshire, with far smaller numbers. We do not know the full extent of the losses in the rural areas around Bowdon, for Dunham was let to tenants from about 1850 and the surviving papers make no reference to the plague. The Cattle Plague Commissioners published summaries by Hundreds not parishes or other smaller units, so we have to be satisfied with Bucklow. There the plague appeared in 551 places, among herds totalling 8925 beasts.

The figures for the affected sites are:

Healthy beasts slaughtered	320	3.58%	}
Diseased slaughtered	4372	48.98%	} 75.34%
Died of disease	2034	22.78%	}
Recovered	1031	11.55%	
Unaccounted for	30	0.33%	
Unaffected on the 551 sites	1138	12.75%	
Totals	8925	99.97%	

We may assume that 8925 was about 2/3 of the total cattle population, in line with the rest of the county and there were somewhat fewer than 3000 owners of livestock. We know this because the Stockport Surveyor of Taxes requisitioned 3250 returns for the census of March 1866. That related to all livestock except horses, not just cattle, so the total would have included urban dairymen and individuals with their own milk cow as well as the (probably) few who had other animals but no cattle. The incidence of loss is typical for the county, for among herds affected it ranged from 78.9% in the Wirral to 67% in Daresbury Hundred. On the Arley estates in Great Budworth, Warburton and Lymm the numbers fell from 274 animals in 1864 to 125 in 1866, a drop of roughly 55%. Some larger herds were almost wiped out. We do obtain one glimpse of the impact at a local level from reports in the Chester Chronicle. In each issue it reported upon one area in more detail, usually in west Cheshire but on 24 March 1866 it concentrated upon Knutsford Division, giving the following details of losses in the preceding month

Township	Cattle lost	£ Value
Ashley	13	245
Bowdon	3	56
Dunham Massey	6	92
Hale	27	346
High Leigh	143	1856
Lymm	59	919
Timperley	1	20
Warburton	22	403

There were no losses in Altrincham, Agden, Bollington, Millington or Rostherne in that month. These figures, multiplied by the nine months of serious outbreak, could give us an idea of the total losses.

The cost for the county was estimated as not far short of £1 m, of which about £350,000 was met by compensation under an Act of February 1866. Most of the major landowners assisted their tenant farmers by direct payments, loans and rent remissions, but this generosity cost them dear, for the compensation paid was not a grant from central government funds, as it would be now, but was met from an increased county rate to which they were the major contributors, either as payers in their own right or because tenants were entitled to deduct half the extra rate from their rents. They thus paid twice, an injustice which probably caused John Tollemache of Peckforton, a south Cheshire M P , to object to the compensation clauses in the Commons' debate on the Act. All the Government was prepared to do was to advance a loan of £270,000 repayable over 30 years at 3% interest. Worse, although towns within the County paid the rate, neighbouring cities like Liverpool did not, even though they depended so heavily upon the rural hinterland as E W Watkin, a Stockport MP . protested in vain.

All this might seem unfair and unsympathetic to us, used as we are to UK. and EC. compensation, but in the mid-nineteenth century few people saw the role of government as being responsive to disasters of this sort. Loans were the remedy for industrial and other crises; charity was the remedy for hardship amongst the unemployed workers. There was much debate. The government would go no further than make a loan and Gladstone expressed outrage at the unprecedented idea of a payment to relieve agricultural hardship. The farming community nevertheless called for compensation from government or anybody. Some people, like a Nantwich correspondent to the Chester Chronicle, thought that public subscription was the answer. Another correspondent argued that farmers were capitalists like mill operators and thus by class not a suitable subject for charity. If they had not insured their livestock as they should have done, they deserved no sympathy . This overlooked the fact that there was little cattle insurance to be had; there was probably none commercially and the small local associations were too poorly funded to survive. The solution, for this school of thought, was that the landlords, as co-partners with the farmers, should dip into their well-lined pockets and plough back some of the profits they had taken in rent. This argument had some force, for in 1852 James Caird M P , an 'improving' agriculturalist had noted in his English Agriculture 1850 that Cheshire landlords took too much of the profit in rent to enable their tenants to save any money. In the end, it was this view that prevailed.

The virulence of the plague was probably largely self induced. The Plague Commissioners and others commented upon the unwillingness of Cheshire farmers to report illness or to slaughter animals. This caused the plague to spread fast. Caird considered that Cheshire feeding methods were poor, for cattle weakened in the winter when they were not fed properly, surviving on a meagre diet of straw, eked out with a little hay and turnip after Christmas. This was precisely when the plague struck hardest These factors, with a concentration of cattle to supply the milk and meat markets of the nearby cities, almost certainly made the crisis in Cheshire much worse than elsewhere.

Despite the terrible economic damage to the county , two much needed improvements sprang from the plague. The first was that it enabled the government to begin the series of annual censuses of livestock and crops, which have continued ever since. Various governments had attempted to hold these for many years but had been defeated by the obstinacy of the farming community and the lack of a suitable administrative mechanism. The disaster of 1865-66 broke that resistance and a successful livestock census was held in March 1866, organised by the Surveyors of the Inland Revenue. Virtually all occupiers of property were persuaded to complete a return, assisted, for the first time by the gentry and clergy , who had also opposed previous attempts. In June there was a less successful crop census, which was seen as a greater intrusion into privacy.

The other improvement was that the losses spurred the government into introducing legislation to encourage both local mutual and commercial cattle insurance schemes. In 1865-66 insurance had been almost unobtainable and although there were some estate schemes they were generally poorly funded with the further weakness that subscription was usually voluntary rather than contractual. There was none on the Arley estates as the tenants could not agree upon terms. The few there were failed soon after the plague began, both in Cheshire and Lancashire.

### **A Rostherne Epitaph by Ronald Trenbath**

On a visit to Rostherne in 1767 William Trenbath enjoyed reading an epitaph on the gravestone of Richard Anson which he noted in his account book. The reason for this rather odd action on his part, may be accounted for in the circumstances of his childhood and education.

When he was born, in a remote part of Cornwall in 1726, William's parents considered that he would eventually , as the youngest son, have to leave home and seek his fortune outside the Duchy . The problem with this requirement lay in the fact that the Duchy of Cornwall at that time, consisted of a community which was isolated from the rest of Britain by the very wild terrain and, nearly impenetrable, moorland of Dartmoor, Exmoor and Bodmin Moor as well as the Tamar River which made it less difficult, at the time, to reach New York by sea from Cornwall, than to travel to London.

This isolation had, over the centuries, led to the retention of a very strong and independent Celtic sub-culture, with clan loyalties, which antagonised people from neighbouring counties, who always considered the Cornish to be French, a not unreasonable conclusion as Cornish fishermen, sailors and merchants had, for centuries traded with their Celtic brothers in Brittany, resulting in much intermarriage and practically all Cornish families having French ancestry.

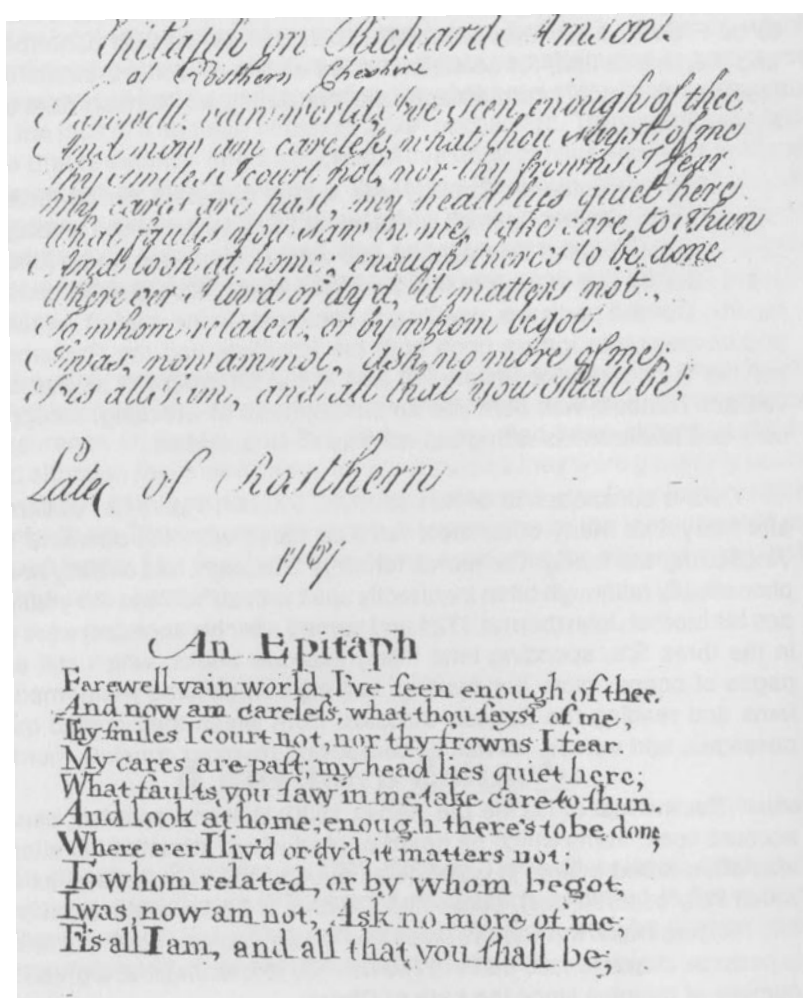
The Seventeenth Century was a very turbulent period for the Duchy commencing with the Spanish 'invasion' of 1595, when John Trenbath's neighbour was decapitated by a cannon-ball outside his house, to be followed forty years later by the trauma of the Civil War when, according to contemporary reports, Cornish partisans, unwilling to participate in the conflict, wreaked havoc and unspeakable torture upon both the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, leaving the country devastated. It was in the aftermath of all this chaos that William Trenbath was born into an environment of wrecking, smuggling, robbery and lawlessness with great hostility to all outsiders.

As a consequence of this situation William's parents, William Senior, and Mary, like many other local families faced with this dilemma set about 'Anglicizing' the family. The name, formerly Trenbath, had already been re-spelt phonetically (although often incorrectly spelt with an 'M') and the young William and his brother John (born in 1721 and named after his ancestor) were grounded in the three R's, spending time filling exercise books, which still exist, with pages of copper plate handwriting, solving complicated mathematical problems and reading the English Classics, from which they copied quotations, passages, and verses, as well as composing rhyming couplets themselves.

For the rest of his life (he died in 1800) William recorded, usually in an account book, items which he heard or read which attracted his attention. He also often noted events in great detail quoting the hour, as well as dates, on which they occurred, and, between 1736 and 1772, he wrote down more than fifty recipes which formed the basis of a family cookery book at a later date. It is perhaps characteristic that in 1750 he tried to calculate, at a given time, the number of minutes since the birth of Christ.

William, his wife, Ann, and their children, finally settled in Cheshire on 7th April 1761 when they arrived in Northwich where they lived before moving in 1766 to Dunham Woodhouses, in the Parish of 'Boden', where he commenced his duties as Salt Revenue Watchman at a salary of £30 a year (£5 more than his colleagues in central Cheshire), to be promoted to Salt Officer in 1770, a strange situation as his brother John, at home in Cornwall, was a successful smuggler, to the dismay of John Wesley who wrote begging him to cease the practice and set a better example to others.

On his return home William rewrote the epitaph from Rostherne as shown:



## Sources

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