

The Bowdon Sheaf

A BOWDON HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATION

No. 44 October 2004

£ 1

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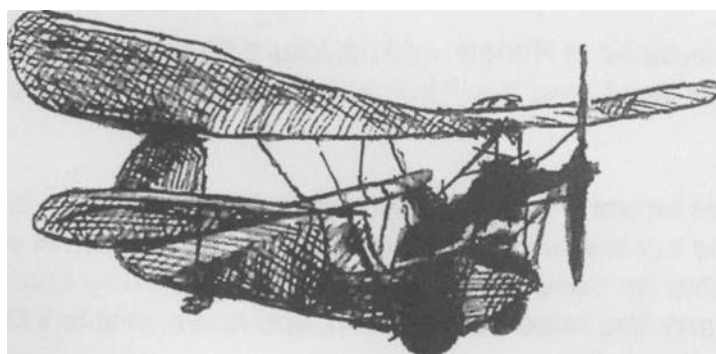
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KILLICK'S FLYING FLEA

ISSN-0265-816X

Bowdon Sheaf Changes in Publication

Due to increasing difficulties being experienced in the production of the Bowdon Sheaf, the Committee of the Bowdon History Society has decided that, in future, only one issue will be published each year instead of two as formerly.

Commencing with the 2004-2005 Session, the Bowdon Sheaf will be available for purchase prior to all future November Meetings and will be enlarged from eight to twelve sheets. It is hoped that this change in programming will result in more efficient publication.

A Bowdon Developer in the Wild West

by Ronald Trenbath

When Robert Crossley Trenbath, at the age of twenty-one, failed to return to his home in Albert Square, Bowdon, his family were very worried and distressed, but their attitude changed to one of anger when it was revealed that he had absconded and taken a one way ticket to New York.

The reason for Robert's behaviour was never explained; it might have been to escape from a domineering family or it could have been an attempt to satisfy a desire for independence, but whatever the reason he never returned and instead built himself a new life in America.

The fortunes of Robert, and his future family, interested A.L. Rowse who undertook research and published articles upon which the following account is given.

On his arrival in the United States Robert became involved in farming but as neither he nor his family had ever had any experience of agriculture, it is not surprising that he does not appear to have been very successful, but he did however marry and raise a son, Edwin, and move west to Washington State. In Central southern Washington the Yakima River joined the Columbia River to traverse half-a-million acres of sage bush desert sparsely populated by native Indians, but like most desert areas in the United States of America the land was very fertile and could be made productive if water becomes available, so, with the Indians confined to reservations in the hills, it was possible to clear the land, introduce irrigation and cultivate the land to create what ultimately became one of the largest wine producing areas on the American continent.

During this period Edwin and the family went into the business of insurance and real estate to become the foremost developers in the Yakima Valley.

It would be very interesting to know more about their pioneering activities in the early days of the conquest of the west, but the lost contact between "the American cousins" and their family in Bowdon has rendered this impossible, in spite of attempts by Rowse to bridge the gap.

In participating in property dealing and development Robert and Edwin were continuing a very long family tradition. Circa 1380 the Trenbath family sold part of their land in Cornwall and in 1442 "Richard de Trenbath Wartha" bought it back from "Thomas Polperde Polper" in an indenture which described it as "La Ville de Trenbath Wartha", at advantageous terms, a mediaeval form of equity release. In 1751 William Trenbath undertook the sale of Havening Hall and Estate on behalf of the Earl of Dorchester at the turn of the 20th Century Robert's uncle, George Trenbath, negotiated the sale of Trafford Park for industrial development, on behalf of Sir Humphrey de Trafford, since which time the family have been involved in urban development in many parts of the world mainly in Australia.

Sources

Correspondence and articles etc by A. L. Rowse – Cornwall Record Office.

Note *Wartha* means 'Upper' in the Cornish language.

Under Canvas at Bowdon

The following article was published in the Graphic on 25th August 1888 and included in a book entitled:

"History as Hot News:
The late 19th Century World as seen through the eyes of the
Illustrated London News and The Graphic 1865-97".
by Leonard de Vries (1976).

Last year a number of the lads belonging to the Hulme and Chorlton-on-Medlock Lads' Club, situated in Mulberry Street, Hulme, were taken to Strines, in Derbyshire, to spend a few days under canvas. The experiment was so successful, and gave such pleasure to the lads, that it was determined to repeat it this year during Whit Week, which is always a period of holiday-making in Lancashire.

The programme was as follows:- A camp was formed on the ground of the shooting range at Bowdon, Cheshire, which was kindly lent for the occasion. Tents were erected for sleeping, kitchens for cooking food, and a canteen and large mess tent were provided for use in the evenings. Each day the lads were to undergo a short drill and, for the sake of discipline, the routine of a regular military camp was preserved. The amusements provided consisted of cricket and football matches, swimming and bathing, athletic sports, and in the evenings, concerts and entertainments. There were five hundred applicants for the trip, but the resources of the committee were insufficient to take more than 180. The camp, which is the rifle range of the Third Cheshire Volunteers, is situated on the banks of the Bollin, not far from New Bridge Hollow, on the old Roman road to Chester. It lies in a sheltered position amid undulating ground. Some twenty conical-shaped tents were provided, with wooden floors, each accommodating some ten lads. Besides these, there were the officials' quarters, a large marquee for a mess-room, and a wooden structure for a kitchen. The cooking operations were carried on over trench-fires in the open air.

Mr Alexander Devine, the originator of the scheme, found the lads wonderfully amenable to discipline. The reveille sounded at six a.m. when the boys turned out and washed. Then the morning parade was held. Breakfast followed, both it and the subsequent meals being announced by bugle-call. Lads who were belated were punished by being sentenced to 'potato-drill,' that is, to peel the potatoes for their own and their companions' dinners. From the reveille until 'lights out' was sounded at ten p.m., the bulk of the time was the lads' own. It was a great pleasure to see so many lads, some of whom are from almost the lowest class, and who, but a short time ago, were spending their leisure hours in the streets, now enjoying the liberty of country fields, and fast becoming tanned with fresh air and sunshine.

Scouting in Bowdon and Dunham Massey by Peter Kemp

Until Local Government changes in 1974, Altrincham County High School for Boys (then called Altrincham Grammar School as now) was actually situated in Bowdon with part of its grounds extended into Hale, and it never was in Altrincham. It had its own Boy Scout Troop, a large one exclusively for the boys of the school, the 3rd Altrincham, of which I was a member from 1933. I left school in 1938 having become a patrol leader (Kangaroos), a King's Scout, holder of the All-Round Cords, the Impresa Medal, and with the woodcraft name of 'Hound-by-Night', the latter bestowed for prowess in following a fox-oil trail in the dead of night through Delamere Forest by smell alone ! The 6-day School week in those days included in its curriculum games on Wednesday afternoons and Scouting, and I chose the latter, not having any interest or aptitude for games.

The then brand-new Scout H.Q. with its verandah supports of Canadian Indian totem pole designs just starting to be carved and today still used by the Scouts, was the centre of all our activity. From there 'wide games' were pursued all over Bowdon, and stalking skills were acquired with each other in the bracken of Dunham New Park then in its original state long before the coming of the reservoir, the war-time prisoner-of-war camp, and the final redevelopment of the golf course. Baden-Powell's 'Scouting for Boys' ideas were still very much in practice at that time. At Easter-times we camped in Delamere Forest near the Cheshire Hunt kennels at Cuddington under the leadership of science master Mr G. W. Sutcliffe, the Scoutmaster (woodcraft name 'Squirrel'), but at weekends in Spring and Summer short camps were held in a field at Home Farm on the Dunham Massey estate down by the Bollin within sight and sound of the Chester Road traffic over New Bridge Hollow.

After Saturday morning school and a quick trip home for a bite of lunch and change into uniform, it was back to School where the trek-cart was loaded at H.Q. with equipment and personal gear for the haul to the camp site with 2 scouts at the crossbar steering, 2 on each side-trace pulling and one or two at the back pushing when necessary. The route lay down the cindered Marlborough Road through its gate and on up South Downs Road and Langham Road to turn left for the easy run down Bow Green Road (a few houses and still a lane in part) to cross the main Chester Road (busy with traffic and much narrower then) at Streethead Farm over on to the Home Farm lane, through the farmyard and over the big field behind, to come to a halt at the top of the Bollin escarpment where the troop had a small hut where permanent equipment was kept beside our water tap.

Four or five patrols set up their green tents close to the river with Squirrel in his one-man tent; the Rover Scouts, old boys of the School, completed the encampment with all their tents. There we settled down, dodging the cowpats, making woodfire kitchens complete with fireplace, grease-pit and trap, mug-tree and larder, not forgetting the communal latrine to be dug out and screened. The patrol leader organised his scouts, often being head cook with an assistant and sending the younger ones foraging for wood and carrying water for washing and cooking. I recall dead-wood gathering along the wooded main Dunham Hall drive towards the gatehouses (later bombed out of existence by the Luftwaffe) and marvelling at the profusion of blue-bells and their scent. If we had been lucky and the weather was hot, we stripped off and swam and bathed in the Bollin's pools where I remember Malcolm Clowe, a school senior and crack swimmer, doing

his renowned speedy crawl-stroke. Under the supervision of the Rovers, towers and bridges were built of wooden poles lashed together with rope, and an aerial ropeway was slung across the Bollin for crossing by pulley, including the trek cart in its sections. Inter-patrol competitions and tent inspections were held and other Rover Scouts and Assistant Scoutmasters such as Harry Killick and Wilf Laidlar came down on the Sunday to help. Saturday night was the occasion for the great campfire where we all sat around the blaze and sang our scout songs, yarned, and had our cocoa and biscuits. Some Sundays, our parents were invited to visit, and usually about teatime we broke camp, cleared the site and replaced turves before loading the trekcart up for the happy tired trek back up the hill to School. I only recall one complete weekend washout when camp had to be abandoned as we were all soaked through to the skin; the tents were left to dry hanging in a bam at Home Farm while we trudged back with our ground-sheets round our shoulders in the teeming rain. All very character-building, it is said! And we still had our weekend homework to do when we got home! Happy days nonetheless with fellow scouts I still remember such as Stobo, Renshaw, Copeman, Hancox and Westwood amongst others.

Little did we guess that most of our Rovers and senior scouts would shortly be away fighting for King and Country, and that some would never return.

Editor Note - Malcolm Clowe achieved distinction academically and athletically both at school and at university, qualifying in medicine. During the war he joined the Merchant Navy as a medical officer where he lost his life rescuing colleagues following the torpedoing of his ship for which he was posthumously decorated.

T'WAS EVER THUS
by Stephen Matthews

ADULTERATION OF FOOD IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

This little note refers back to a time when there was a tax on tea, both green and black varieties. This tax was administered by the Board of Inland Revenue, which referred to an unusual question in its Report for 1870. In its reports the Board sometimes reflected upon developments over a number of years, which is why this extract refers back to 1862: rarely did its dry official language match the sarcasm of its comment.

Adulteration of Tea

The progress of science has preserved the forest trees of Britain from annihilation. Instead of the ruder process of substituting the British for the Chinese leaf, our modern tea dealers have recourse to pigments which revive, to outward appearance, the exhausted dregs of the genuine article. Prussian blue and a little gum give what is called a facing to black tea; and there are materials, not, it is to be feared of so innocent a nature by which black tea is converted into green. This latter practice appears to be so general as to have become a regular and recognised part of tea dealers' business; and it is not a little amusing to see how entirely unconscious they are of the real purport of their acts. They write to us that they doubt whether it can be contrary to any provisions to convert black tea into green; that if this really be the case, they must of course give up the practice, but that they hope to find that our officers are mistaken in so informing them, as it will be extremely inconvenient for them, and a great interference with their trade. We fear that we may be open to the reproach of having departed from the calmness of official style and phraseology in pointing out to some of these gentlemen in our replies, that there is another law, besides that in the statute book, which they had somehow contravened.

Nothing can better show the state of feeling upon this subject than the following letter from one of them, which we present without comment, in its genuine simplicity.

"To the Commissioners of Inland Revenue

London 29th April 1862

Gentlemen, A scarcity of green tea having taken place, while we have an abundant supply of black tea, this season, I shall be much obliged by a reply to the following question:-

Is it legally right to stain black tea, green, or vice versa, by such staining there being no increase in the weight, such tea having duly paid the legitimate duty.

Your most obedient servant"

The assertion that there would be no increase in the weight was intended to assure the Board that there would be no loss of duty on that score.

A Startling Experience for Altrincham Firemen
Report from the Altrincham & Bowdon Guardian of Wednesday, 15th, Nov., 1893
by Chris Hill

At two minutes to eleven, on Saturday night (11th. Nov.), information was brought to the Altrincham Fire Station, that a fire had broken out at High Lawn, Rose Hill, Bowdon, the residence of Mrs. Carlisle. The brigade at once turned out in charge of Superintendent Youlton. Meanwhile the outbreak, which had occurred in the cylinder chamber in the bathroom, had been subdued, the house being well fitted up with fire extinguishing appliances. The cylinder chamber was almost demolished and much damage was done to the bathroom and the room below, by water. The damage is estimated at about £25. The origin of the fire is unknown.

The news of the outbreak spread with great rapidity, and before the brigade arrived, a crowd had assembled in front of High Lawn. On brigade's arrival, the people shouted in a manner which startled the horses pulling the fire engine, and an alarming accident was the result. It appears that the driver had endeavoured to check the speed of the horses when near to High Lawn, and had got them well in hand until about twenty yards distant from the house, when owing to the shout set up by the crowd, the horses burst into a furious gallop. Then came the exciting part of the incident. The large iron gates which stand in front of the house were closed, probably with a view to preventing the people from surging into the grounds. Had the gates been opened, the fire engine could easily have been brought to a standstill in the carriage drive, and the catastrophe which followed would have been averted. It would have meant death and destruction to have continued the course of the engine in a straight line, consequently it had to be directed down a steep incline (Neild's Brow), which runs down the side of the residence to South Downs road. The brake of the engine was applied, but the horses were unmanageable and the engine shot down the incline at a terrific rate. It was a sight to appal the stoutest heart. Several of the firemen jumped into the roadway as the engine, with ever-increasing speed, continued its downward course, but the majority remained on, clinging to each other in a state of the most intense fear and excitement. Like an arrow from a bow, the engine dashed across Langham Road, and into the narrow road at the bottom of Neild's Brow. The driver of the fire engine had never once lost his head and his presence of mind was marvellous. By superhuman exertion of strength, when the engine was commencing the descent of this second incline, he swerved the horses round and directed them into the hedge which fences a turnip field and skirts the right of the incline. The horses dashed through the hedge, the engine was overturned, the firemen pitched off in all directions, and the driver was hurled into the field a distance of thirty feet. Thus the mad career of the runaway horses ended.

The fire engine was variously damaged, while one horse lay under the broken pole and the other lay stretched across its fellow, The harness had to be cut to extricate the horses, one of which was slightly injured. A young man named John Bailey (who had no right to be on the engine, but was assumed to have volunteered to help the brigade, in defiance of an order given by Superintendent Youlton), was discovered lying on the ground with his legs under the overturned engine. At first it was thought his legs were broken, but these fears were groundless and happily he was only severely shaken. He was sent home to Broadheath in a cab. Fireman Bowland suffered from a dislocation of the right shoulder, and will probably be incapacitated from duty for some weeks. The rest of the firemen were more or less cut and bruised. Superintendent Youlton, who jumped off when the fire engine was turned down the first part of the incline, had his hands and knees badly cut; and P.S. Christian, who accompanied the brigade, and had also endeavoured to escape from injury when the horses were tearing away at a breakneck pace, had jumped into the roadway soon after Superintendent Youlton, had one of his hands badly cut. The members of the brigade had to drag the damaged engine back to Altrincham, and it required great exertion to raise it from its position in the field. This task was performed in the presence of a jeering crowd of people, who blamed the firemen for the occurrence and hooted them in consequence.

On returning to Altrincham the brigade stocked and made ready another engine, to be used in case of emergency. It was stated by one person that the brake had failed to act, and that it was out of order. To prove the fallacy of this statement, while the engine was standing in the yard at the fire station, the brake was applied, and the people were asked to move the engine, but although they exerted their greatest strength, the engine could not be moved in the least degree. It was also stated that the brake was not applied descending Neild's Brow, but the curb-stone all the way down bears marks of the wheel grating along it in consequence of the brake having been applied, proving this statement also, to be wholly fallacious. It would be well if the Altrincham Local Board insured the members of the fire brigade against accidents (of course only sustained in the execution of their duty). In view of the great dangers to which the men are exposed when attending a fire, it would mean the expenditure of only a few shillings per year for each man. Saturday's experience being a startling instance.

As a post script, it may be mentioned that Fireman Isaac Bowland died as a result of his injuries, a year later, on 28th. November, 1894. The original account was somewhat longer and has been edited slightly.

A Boyhood Inspiration
An Appreciation of Harry Killick, 1897—1966
by Peter J. Kemp

At Grammar School in the 1930s, among our 'role models' — to use today's term—was Harry Killick, a Rover and Scoutmaster of the 3rd Altrincham Troop of Boy Scouts, a mainstay of this great troop, one of the largest in the country. He had made the Scout Movement the major occupation of his life since becoming too old to fly and for motorcar racing, and it was to remain so almost to the very end of his life.

In my case, he was one of the reinforcing influences for me becoming a volunteer pilot in the 1939-1945 War, so following my father's World War I experience as an R.F.C. pilot. The 1930s were exciting times in the conquest of the air- we watched the King's Cup Air Race pass over Sale while lunching in the garden ; also the R100 airship droning over (little did I know that when called up for pilot training tests in the R.A.F. it would be at Cardington, Bedfordshire with its great airship hangars (still there)) the great England - Australia Air Race won by Scott and Campbell Black in the De Havilland Comet and Sikorsky had flown his helicopter. Locally my dreams of flying were further inspired by a school trip to London which took in a visit to its main airport at Croydon where two of Imperial Airways huge silver corrugated aluminium biplane 'airliners' were on view, and also seeing Sir Alan Cobham's Air Circus in action at a large field at Ridgeway Road, Timperley - Harry Killick had done some "circus" flying, I understand. We schoolboys knew that Harry flew occasionally at Woodford, the home of the great manufacturer A.V.Roe, and two of us cycled there in the hope that we might see him and beg a flight — unfortunately not; the same happened when I did see Amy Mollison's husband Jim at Barton aerodrome, then the airport for Manchester before Ringway.

But real excitement was kindled when around 1935 Harry started to build a 'Flying Flea' aircraft invented in 1933 by a Frenchman M. Henri Mignet. The plans for construction were published in the magazine "Popular Mechanics" and the little aircraft's airborne adventures were extensively reported in the "Daily Express". The 1935 cost of materials to make it, except for the engine and propeller, was £25. Harry's workshop was in one of the lock-up premises on Ashley Road just over the railway bridge on the left from the Bleeding Wolf crossroads (now developed as smart offices). The 'Flying Flea' was a single-seat tiny short machine of wood and canvas construction powered by a motor-cycle type engine, and it looked almost like a pram fitted with two wings, but no tailplane, only a rudder - elevation control was by warping the main wing and there were no ailerons! Such a design was a sure recipe for trouble and some enthusiasts lost their lives. It is doubtful whether Harry ever flew his machine since the French

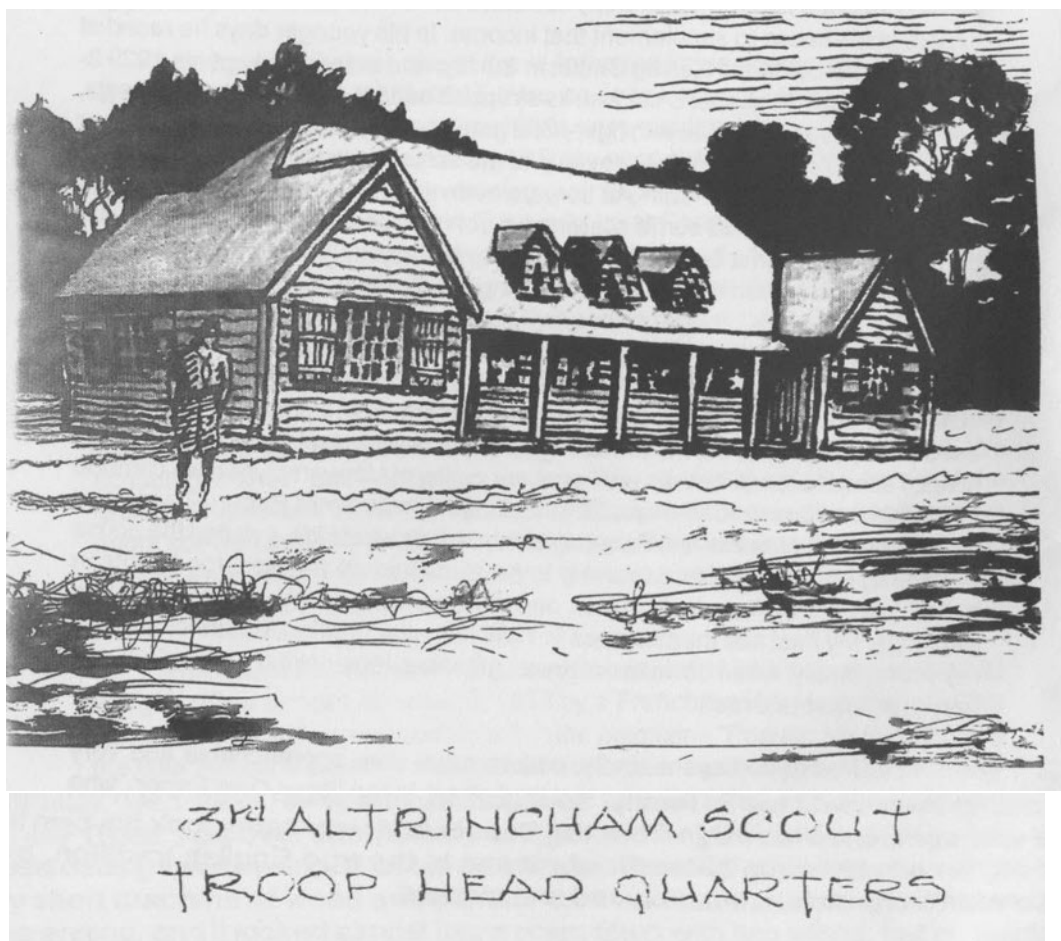
authorities banned the Flea' from flying in 1936 and our Air Ministry in 1937, even after modifications in design to overcome its uncontrollable diving and stalling problems. Harry, with his usual good nature, allowed us boys to come and see what he was doing and to answer all our eager questions. Later schoolboys will remember his attempt to build a pedal-powered autogyro for the £5000 prize on offer, and having to telephone Ringway Airport for clearance to try to take to the air in his back garden!

Henry Durant Killick, who was educated at Bowdon College, lived in Vicarage Lane, and was the ninth child in a large family of a Manchester merchant and J.R who left him a small annuity sufficient for most of his needs; he did build trailers at his house to supplement that income. In his younger days he raced at the famous Brooklands Racing Circuit in Surrey, and indeed he kept his 1929 2-seater Alvis open-top sports car with its strapped bonnet, 'knock-on' wire wheels, and 4-speed crash gearbox with right-hand gate change, until he died. I remember the great excitement when he drove up to the school for us boys to marvel at its lines and obvious power - some of us were even allowed to sit in the driving seat! His moustache covered some scarring he got from some mishap when he was burned in the fire that broke out. The racing fuel used in those days was very volatile and cars often caught fire on starting or refuelling.

Nobody ever recalls Harry wearing long trousers. He always wore his faded khaki Rover Scout uniform, though towards the end he did take to wearing a kilt instead of shorts for his Scottish ancestry. He smoked a small briar pipe and used a walking stick with a V thumb grip when we were at Scout camp or on hikes; I seem to recall he was with us at our camp at Ullswater when we climbed Helvellyn and descended along Striding Edge. He had met Baden-Powell and had attended jamborees and Scouting absorbed his whole life. I visited the house in Vicarage Lane once and found it to be furnished as a hostel for Scouts in transit with North American Indian and African artefacts as well as Scouting trappings. My final sad memory was in 1966 just after moving to Altrincham with my young family, when down in the town I glimpsed him looking gaunt, tired and very ill across the street.

He was to us boys a kindly, patient man, very approachable and very much in the mould of the heroes we read about in the "Boys Own Paper", who counted boy scouts as his family. So much so, that when suffering from cancer, he was compelled to resign from the Scouts and very sadly took his own life. An adventurous bachelor of means in the true English tradition, one of Bowdon's characters, much loved and missed.

With grateful thanks to Ronald Trenbath, the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, Air and Space Section (which has details of the 'Flying Flea' and one on show), and to Trafford Local Studies, Sale for a copy of the Obituary In the 'Altrincham, Hale and Bowdon Guardian' for 15 December, 1966. Also to the websites of the RAF Museum, the North East Aircraft Museum and the Alvis Register Ltd.



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