

The Bowdon Sheaf

A BOWDON HISTORY SOCIETY PUBLICATION

No. 50 October 2011

£1.50

Contents:

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| The Spoils of War | Chris Hill |
| The Disappearing Grammar School Gun | Ronald Trenbath |
| Bowdon Polo Club | Ronald Trenbath |
| The Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment | David Miller |



ISSN-0265-816X

The Spoils of War

by Chris Hill

An email query in July 2010 followed by a Christmas-time written enquiry from the National Tank Museum in Suffolk to the Altrincham History Society, asked if Altrincham had accepted a tank after World War I when the government circulated this offer to a number of towns in England. At that time, roughly speaking, Altrincham was more concerned about where to erect a war memorial to those killed in the conflict. The Court Leet strongly advocated a site in the Old Market Place, while the council did not consider it a suitable place. This generated much discussion and eventually, possibly because of traffic problems even in those days, the Altrincham War Memorial was erected at the junction of St. Margaret's Road and Dunham Road, actually outside the town in Dunham Township. This memorial was designed by George Faulkner Armitage who also designed a war memorial for Bowdon. This memorial is a porch dated 1921 with stained glass windows, the entrance to the church on Higher Downs where Bowdon History Society holds its meetings. It seems pretty certain that Altrincham did not take advantage of the offer of a tank to put on display.

If I remember correctly, when on a Blue Badge guided tour of the Deansgate area of Manchester probably in Lower Byrom Street, the guide pointed out some pavement posts blocking vehicle access that were cannon barrels captured during the Crimean War and brought back as salvage.

Going further back in time, following the Napoleonic Wars, a large amount of money from captured treasure and the sale of wartime spoils was distributed throughout England to the parishes. As I have heard the tale, Bowdon Parish spent some of the money on having two houses built in Apsley Grove. On wandering round the backwaters of Vicarage Lane, attracted by an intriguing farmhouse there, I chanced on a magnificent magnolia in bloom, worthy of a photograph, and as a result got chatting to the lady owner of Magnolia Cottage who passed on this information from a knowledge of her deeds. I hope this causes more about this little bit of local history to surface.

In passing, Apsley House was the residence bought by the nation for, and in appreciation of, and the achievements of the Duke of Wellington in the wars

against Napoleon. If I remember correctly, the address of Apsley House is No.1, London.

Just to continue this theme of the remnants of wars, after World War II the country was littered with many examples of the remains of wartime. Pill boxes come to mind; there was one for some time left at the top of the Warburton Bridge over the Ship Canal. Incidentally, it is claimed that some of the arches above the roadway of the bridge had to be replaced to strengthen it, to carry the weight of tanks travelling into Cheshire, and the 'old' and 'new' types are still to be seen. A couple of pillboxes were left at the munitions site at Sinderland, the one near the entrance having recently been covered up with soil. The other could be seen from Carrington Lane. Another open machine gun 'nest' can still be found on the north bank of the disused entrance to Dunham Hall from the Chester road. It overlooked the Lymm Corner junction and Newbridge Hollow. One dreads to think how long it would have remained active had an actual skirmish been necessary.

Another type of wartime relic in some cases left for years if their removal was not urgent, were the concrete platforms for anti-aircraft guns. I am told there was a site at Altrincham Grammar School and that the gun was buried there with its barrel sticking out of the ground. I was there in 1945 and never heard of such a thing. However, there was a home guard bullet hole through one of the window frames of the cloakroom nearest to Mr. Broom, the caretaker's house, which was a source of interest to us boys. Another site is said to have been near the Bollin bridge at the Bleeding Wolf. Again, a site is mentioned in the literature as being on the outskirts of Hale Barns village, but I looked for this concrete base without success. Readers may well have memories of other local leftovers from wartime, or the results of the benefits of wartime booty.

The Disappearing Grammar School Gun

by Ronald Trenbath

Boys who attended the Altrincham Grammar School prior to 1945 will remember the small cannon which had formed a decorative feature when the school was first built in 1912. Mr Laver, the headmaster, ordered it to be

buried after 1918 by 'Pharaoh' Parks, the caretaker, as it was considered to be a hurtful reminder to those who had suffered in World War I.

This act led to the more adventurous and archaeologically-minded junior boys discovering the site and excavating it. It was then buried on a different site, only to be tracked down again and re-exhumed by young boys. This game between juniors, staff and seniors became a tradition for many years, reported humorously one speech day by the next headmaster, Mr Hamblin.

Authority finally won and the offending weapon disappeared, possibly as scrap metal in World War II. Some former pupils of that era will have happy memories, particularly as cubs, of tracking down the gun and secretly excavating it in traditional Mortimer Wheeler fashion, and we are indebted to Chris Hill for reviving these memories.

Bowdon Polo Club

by Ronald Trenbath

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1939 residents in Bowdon would often enjoy a pleasant and entertaining afternoon sitting at the Polo Grounds at Ashley Heath, watching Bowdon Polo Club compete with local rivals, while young boys would select suitable and vacant grounds and practise on bicycles the sport performed by their seniors.

It was an idyllic site situated between the tithe barn on Ashley Mill Lane and Fish House Plantation on the lane to Ryecroft Farm, being a very large, level and well-drained field, with a neat row of resting stables, clearly shown on the 1910 Ordnance Survey map together with a pavilion.

Polo, which was recorded in early evidence as being played in 525BC in Persia, was introduced into India where it was developed as a very popular game. It was adopted by Assam Tea Planters in 1850 under the name "Hockey on Horseback," and an article in The Field magazine in 1869 extolling its virtues, motivated 'Chuck' Hartopp and two fellow officers of the 10th Hussars to form teams and play the first public game in Britain at Houndslow a few weeks later.

Interest spread rapidly to Cheshire where horse breeders shewed keen interest and a Bowdon team was formed in 1891, followed by other local parishes, in keeping with the county's long equestrian heritage.

As the sport developed it was accepted that, in the interests of safety and to combat dangerous play in what is a very dangerous game, Field Rules would have to be introduced. In time these were published as the Hurlingham Polo Association Rules of Polo 1939, to be applied nationally and accepted internationally. The rules were extended to cover other items than safety and introduce standardisation covering ground size; number of players in a team; duration of play; scoring of goals; handicaps; and head gear. The initial training of players on bicycles was recommended, although it is doubtful if local boys were aware of this when they practised on bicycles. No requirements were specified regarding ponies and it was left to a rider's discretion concerning the animal he chose, but it was generally accepted that the polo pony is a type rather than a breed and that it should be between 12 and 16 hands, steady, alert, capable of speed, with courage and good playing temperament. Cheshire bloodstock dealers were quick to meet these demands and many of them diversified from breeding hunters and race horses to specialise as polo-pony breeders, exporting to other areas of the country.

It was also specified that a team would consist of four players and that seven-minute chukkas should make up a game, with eight chukkas constituting a full game.

In 1906 the Marquis of Cholmondley joined his team, the Manchester Polo Club, with Bowdon Polo Club to form a formidable team, to be joined by Wirral Polo Club in 1939. The club transferred their ground to Little Budworth in 1951 and took the name the Cheshire Polo Club, claiming to be the oldest club in England and ranking with Hurlingham for prestige.

Many local residents will remember, with nostalgia, the occasion when the Duke of Edinburgh and the young Prince Charles came with the Windsor Club, together with Jimmy Edwards' team 'Wacko', to play against Cheshire at Little Budworth, the Duke practising before the match and the spectators diplomatically ignoring him, until the field was cleared in order that Edwards and de Ferranti could land their plane and helicopter. A child ran on to the course and the Duke heroically charged across on his pony and lifted him to

safety. The event provided most excellent play and a socially pleasant afternoon never to be forgotten.

It would be interesting to know if any of the boys who practised on bicycles at Ashley Heath ever became serious players. Several became very keen riders but it is not known if any of them ever played polo.

The Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment

by David Miller

The Bowdon Hotel on Langham Road started life in 1871 as the Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment.

The origins of hydropathy

Hydropathy, now called hydrotherapy, involving the use of warm or cold water for the management of pain relief and treating illness, was practised in early Chinese, Japanese and Egyptian cultures and is still popular today. The Romans had public baths for citizens and used springs in the treatment of illness. After being lost for centuries hydropathy was revived in Austria in the 1830s. From the mid-1840s hydropathic establishments were opened across Britain, often linked to teetotalism. Malvern spring water was used as a medical treatment in clinics in England. Bathing establishments were known as spas where natural healing waters emerged as springs, often in limestone regions such as at Bath, Cheltenham, Buxton and Matlock some of which have been used since Roman times. Often the water was drunk as well as used for bathing, generally good but sometimes tasting foul and smelling of bad eggs. Hydrotherapy treatment is still used today for improving mobility, for muscular relaxation and for improving blood circulation.

The Stamford Papers

In the Stamford Papers in the John Rylands Library, catalogue editor John Hodgson says, "Following the arrival of the railway in Altrincham in 1849, the 7th Earl of Stamford took advantage of the increased demand for land by selling building plots in Altrincham, Hale, Bowdon, Dunham Massey and Bollington, whilst reserving an annual chief rent. In the absence of local authority planning controls, Lord Stamford imposed restrictions on the number of buildings, the materials used and the future use the buildings. The

sale of plots was continued by his agents after his move from Dunham Massey to Enville Hall in 1855 and by his trustees after his death in 1883, and continued into the 20th century.”

John has identified the Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment on an OS plan (EGR14/14/6) as building grounds BG81 and BG91. BG81 was sold to Samuel Kenworthy, hydropathist of Altrincham in 1871 (EGR14/13/3/64), while BG91 was sold to Thomas Warrington, builder of Altrincham, in 1873 (EGR14/13/3/74).

Samuel Kenworthy, hydropath

Worrall's *Directory of Cheshire* 1871 lists Samuel Kenworthy as the proprietor of the Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment on Langham Road, as does an advertisement in the *Manchester Guardian* of June 30th 1871.

Samuel Kenworthy was born in Oldham in 1836 and in the 1851 census was recorded as an 'iron moulder'. In 1861 he was living with his father Charles in Oldham who was connected with the firm of Lees & Co, engineers and iron moulders. Samuel became interested in hydropathy after visiting Matlock for his health and studied in his spare time.

Samuel set up his first hydro in the Isle of Man where he met and married Esther Backwell and they had two sons Arthur (b.1864 Oldham) and George (b.1868 Altrincham). In 1871 he was listed as running a hydropathic establishment in Bowdon while living on Stockport Road, Altrincham with his wife, brother Charles who was his assistant, two servants, two lodgers, and his sons Arthur and George, a substantial household. Having purchased land in Bowdon on 20th May 1871 to built the Bowdon Hydro on Langham Road, he lost no time in advertising it widely in the spring of the same year. By 1876 he had also established a hydropathic establishment on the corner of Bold Street/Bath Street, Southport and in 1881 and 1891 is recorded as living in Southport.

Dr Alastair Durie in a paper given to the Scottish Church History Society in 2001 quotes him as a "veteran hydropath of Stockport," saying that he "was asked what he thought about the growing practice of providing entertainments. He said that 'at peak holiday times there might be some



*Samuel Kenworthy
(Malcolm Shifrin)*

relaxation, but only within very strict limits: we certainly don't approve of dancing or alcoholics'." Stockport is a misprint for Southport where he moved in the middle of the 1870s and lived until his death in 1899 aged 63. His son Dr Arthur Kenworthy took over the business. In the 1880s Samuel published a treatise on "the treatment of common complaints and hydro," and in 1889 a directory of hydros in England and Scotland. Samuel advertised himself as a hydropathic physician, licensed by the Hygeia-therapeutic College in New York. An advertisement in the *Manchester Guardian* for The Limes Hydro in Southport of the 19th May 1894 listed it as having "separate suites of Turkish, Russian, electro-chemical and hydropathic baths for men and women."

Thomas Warrington, builder

Warrington family history records that Thomas Warrington and his son George Harry built the Bowdon Hydro, though no other evidence has come to light. Thomas Warrington was born in Altrincham in 1821, trained as a carpenter and joiner and became a builder in Altrincham. From 1859 to 1887 he acquired building land from the Stamford estate, constructing eleven large houses in Barrington Road; Grimsworthy, Hadleigh, and Westleigh in Groby Road; and shops in George Street. The planning records show that in 1897 Thomas also applied to build a music hall and theatre in George Street although there is no evidence that he succeeded with this plan.

In 1872/74 Thomas Warrington was a member of the Altrincham Local Board, the forerunner of the local council. In 1873 and 1874 he again bought land in Bowdon from the Stamford estate, consisting of plot refs BG91 on 9 Aug 1873 (EGR14/13/3/74) and BG98 on 21 Dec 1874 (EGR14/13/3/80). On the former he built a pair of large semi-detached houses, Langham Lea and Hawthorn Lea, next to the Bowdon Hydro with a chief rent of £26.6.8. On the latter he built a pair of large semi-detached houses, Farley Lodge and Stancliffe on the corner of Cavendish Road and Delamer Road with a chief rent of £34. At the time his address was Chapel Road (the lower part of the present Regent Road).

George Harry Warrington

From 1878 to 1887 Thomas Warrington's son George Harry followed in his father's footsteps and bought land in Bentinck Road, Altrincham where he built four houses: Hillside, Grasmere, White Lee, and Rockwood.

The Bowdon Hydro

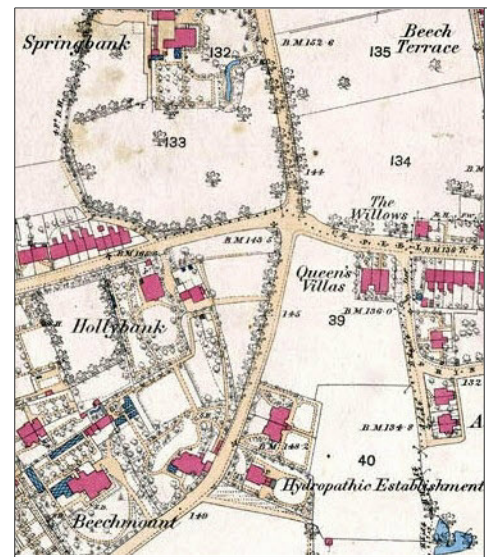
The front of the large building was on Langham Road but the bulk of it faced south. It was built on part of a field called Cook's Cross which was glebe (parish) land belonging jointly to the Bishop of Chester and the Earl of Stamford. The Hydro, as it became known, attracted patients suffering from respiratory problems. It provided spa and electrical therapy and contained a public Turkish Baths. People came from some distance to this treatment centre which used water from a large capped well fed by a spring out of Bowdon Hill, found on the site during building work at the rear in the 1970s, to prime a tank in the roof. It is unlikely that the spring water contained healing minerals but probably some iron was present from sandy Bowdon Hill. The electrical treatment consisted of a chair for the person to sit in with containers for arms and legs to which batteries would be attached in various combinations, not unlike TENS machines used today for pain relief. The facilities are listed in directories of 1883 and 1898.

The *Manchester Guardian* of 11 August 1902 advertised the Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment as having:

“An Excellent situation. Turkish Massage and all hydropathic treatment. Every comfort. Terms moderate. Good private rooms. Tel 0207.”

An advertisement in the *Altrincham Guardian Year Book* for 1907 also described the establishment:

“Arthur Cotterill is the manager and offers A Delightful First-class Residence for Families as Visitors, or Patients wanting treatment, Russian, Steam Baths, Packs, Massage etc. Commercial men



The Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment on the 6" OS map surveyed 1876.

accommodated. Near Hale and Altrincham Stations. Telephone no. 1207.”

The 1911 *Altrincham Guardian Yearbook* advertised first-class accommodation from 7s per day (£2 2s 0d per week), Smedley’s System of Hydropathy, and the Latest Electric Baths. In a guide to Hale in the 1920s the Hydro advertised facilities for billiards, tennis and croquet. There were also garages and the hydropathic, electrical treatment and massage were still advertised.

The Bowdon Hotel

In 1967 Noel White and Peter Swales, directors of Altrincham Football Club, each bought a one-third share of the hotel. In 1968 Noel moved in to run the business and in 1969 took over as sole owner. At that time an item remaining from the hydro days was a unit finished in copper with a tap fixed to the door frame leading from the entrance hall into the bar area. The Hydro name was dropped in 1969 and it became the Bowdon Hotel as there was no longer any hydropathic treatment on the premises. However about 1970 when builders were remodelling the lower ground floor, they came across a section of white glazed bricks. This is what became the Cheshire Bar and Cheshire Suite, so there was still some hydro evidence remaining at that time.

Noel extended the building to the south and later bought the two large semi-detached houses in Langham Road to the north, numbers 1 and 3, Langham Lea and Hawthorn Lea, which were built in yellow brick similar to the Bowdon Hotel. Beyond that was part of Garner’s Nurseries which also had land across Langham Road, now Garner Close. Noel later bought the land next to Langham Lea and Hawthorn Lea from the Garners to use as a car park and donated a small area of land at the northern end to Bowdon UDC. He carried out the first extension to the south in 1972, creating 21 extra bedrooms and laid out the car park. When Noel carried out this extension, the contractors had some difficulty with what they termed ‘shifting sands’, presumably a spring used to supply the hydro.

A colour leaflet of 1982/3 described the facilities: There were 41 bedrooms each with a radio, colour TV and phone, all but three with ensuite bathrooms. There were facilities for business conferences, banquets, receptions, and dinner dances every Saturday, in three suites: the Marlborough, the Cheshire



The Bowdon Hotel in 2011

and the Executive. Dining was for residents and non-residents and offered 40 main dishes.

The Bowdon Hotel Ltd and the land were sold in January 1986 to Frames Tours Ltd, including planning permission to link the two houses to

the north. They carried out the extensions seen today in about 1992. The Bowdon Hotel is now part of the Mercure chain and includes a health club with a gym, an indoor swimming pool, a spa pool, a sauna, a steam room and a solarium, not too dissimilar from the original hydro facilities.

Oral history

There are many springs out of Bowdon Hill caused by rain drainage in the deep sand hitting the underlying clay. One spring may have been used to power a fustian mill built near to the hotel site in 1776 where Garner Close is now, just above Langham Road. Another spring would have supplied water to the Hydro well. Local historian Alfred Tarbolton wrote that streams bordering both sides of the present Ashley Road linked up with various tributaries in South Downs Road including one coming from the direction of the Bowdon Hydropathic Establishment. All of these springs have now been culverted but there was evidence of their presence when Willowtree Road and Ashley Road sewers were renewed in 2010 and the contractor had some difficulties draining the Ashley Road area.

Local tradition says that a medicinal well existed in medieval times at the junction of what is now Stamford Road, Ashley Road, Langham Road and Marlborough Road. 'The Springs' still exist in Bow Green Road used by Victorians for fresh water, now sadly covered over but, when visible, were full of fresh-water shrimps, a good sign of pure water.

Harold Trenbath and friends often visited the Turkish Baths at the Hydro, as recommended by local GPs, to alleviate arthritis in the 1920s. One could see patients sunning themselves in the glass veranda overlooking the rose beds of Garners Nursery which were a local 'sight' in spring and summer.

Many very wealthy patients, particularly women, travelled some distance in expensive Rolls-Royces and Bentleys with chauffeurs and personal maids, for treatment at the Bowdon Hydro. The cars were parked at the rear of the

building on Marlborough Road where the chauffeurs would attend and clean them when not travelling. The chauffeurs would lodge at bed-and-breakfast accommodation often run by the wives of mechanics at the local garages, and would entertain their hosts with interesting gossip from all over the country. Some patients were permanent residents.

It is said that Roger Grey, the last Lord Stamford, used to visit the Bowdon Hydro as a break from Dunham Hall after his mother died.

Samuel Kenworthy and Thomas Warrington had great foresight when they acquired the land from Lord Stamford and built the Bowdon Hydro and adjacent houses.

Thanks to George Higham, John Hodgson, Sue Nichols, Malcolm Shifrin, Ronald Trenbath, Andrea Warrington, Noel White and Trafford Local Studies for their assistance with this article.

The views and material published in the Bowdon Sheaf do not necessarily represent the views of the Editors or of the Bowdon History Society.

This journal is copyright. No part of it may be reproduced or used without the express written consent of the Bowdon History Society.