

The Bowdon Sheaf

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**Bowdon & College,
CHESHIRE.**

Principal - THEOPHILUS D. HALL, M.A.
Classical Gold Medallist of the University of London; Fellow of University College, London; formerly Professor of Classical and English Literature, in the Lancashire College, Manchester.

Vice-Principal - - Rev. HORACE E. HALL, M.A.,
Assisted by highly qualified Resident and Visiting Masters.

The proportion of Masters to pupils (including Day Scholars) is about one to twelve.
The situation of the School is remarkably open and healthy, and in a delightful neighbourhood.
Boys in the Upper Forms (excepting under special circumstances) are expected to take the Cambridge Local Examination (Junior or Senior), held annually in December; also the work of the entire School is periodically tested by Examiners from one of the great Public Educational Bodies.
Special care is devoted to the preparation of young boys for the more advanced classes.
The domestic arrangements of the establishment are superintended with the utmost possible vigilance and regard for the health and welfare of the pupils. In the bedrooms, boys are grouped according to age and compatibility of temperament; and not more than four in any one room.

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**TERMS (inclusive):—**

|                       |   |                       |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| BOARDERS UNDER TWELVE | - | 65 GUINEAS PER ANNUM. |
| " ABOVE               | " | 70 "                  |

The above charges include instruction in all subjects, excepting Instrumental Music and Drawing; they include also *all ordinary School expenses, viz:* Books and Stationery, Laundry, and Seat in Church.

**T. D. HALL, Principal.**

SSN-0265-816X



## Bowdon College

by David Miller

Bowdon College on South Downs Road was a flourishing private school between 1874 and 1936, taking day pupils and boarders from 8 to 18.

In 1880 school attendance had become compulsory for pupils up to age 10 gradually rising to 15 in 1947. The 1902 Balfour Education Act made County and County Borough Education Committees responsible for higher education and the result was grant-maintained grammar schools with scholarships from primary schools resulting in the great expansion of low-cost public education and the establishment of many successful primary, secondary and grammar schools in the area.

Many of the early schools followed the national pattern of being associated with churches or were privately owned. Bowdon had a free grammar school in Richmond Road from 1553 which was rebuilt twice and eventually became Bowdon Church Primary School. However the Bowdon area provided an opportunity for private education, especially in the Victorian era when many schools opened.



*Bowdon College on the 1876 OS map*

By 1870 Professor Theophilus Dwight Hall, a professor of law, Greek and Latin who lived at 10 Higher Downs, had taken over from Professor T. M. D. Meiklejohn who ran a day and boarding school at Rosehill, South Road, Bowdon (subsequently a laundry, now apartments). Its success caused the demise of Bowdon Grammar School at Oldfield House in Oldfield Brow, set up in 1761. Professor Hall renamed it Bowdon College and in 1874 transferred the school to the South Downs Road site. He had bought building ground on what had been part of Bowdon Moss from Lord Stamford in 1870 and built the college on a field called Big Moss on the corner of South Downs Road and Grange Road.



As pupils increased he added more land in 1875 south to the footpath to York Drive and east to Bowdon Cricket Ground, most of which was later used by Altrincham Grammar School for Girls. The college was aimed at Altrincham tradesmen who were prepared to pay modest fees for a good education at a secondary school. There was no school board. In its time it was probably the best school in a wide area until state schools gradually took over following the 1902 Education Act.

Professor Hall retired in 1892 when he was succeeded by William Matthew Smith, formerly headmaster and co-owner of Thanet College, Kent who commissioned the two-storey extension on the western side later used by Altrincham Preparatory School.



*Bowdon College front from  
South Downs Road*



*Bowdon College back*

Boys were taught by specialists in classics, maths and science, or modern languages. They were trained for business careers and prepared for Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester universities, as well as technical schools, the Civil Service, Sandhurst and the Navy. Younger boys aged eight or more were specially prepared for public schools and the Osborne Naval College.

The very large main building was then used as the headmaster's house and to house boarders. At the back was a small sports ground surrounded by trees, later used by APS for Sports Days, with a much larger field beyond.

In 1895 a gym, fives courts and a workshop were added and in 1897 new classrooms were built and the drainage completely renewed. In 1903 a physics laboratory was added and in 1911 the chemical laboratory was refitted.

John Whitehead was a pupil at the college during the 1890s and won many prizes for his work, including ten leather-bound books still possessed by the

family, for progress in Latin, English, music, mathematics and modern languages, all signed by William Smith. John joined the family firm in Moscow importing cotton-spinning machinery from the UK.

In 1902 the Bowdon Lawn Tennis Club used the college facilities to stage dramatic and musical evenings to raise money for a new ladies' pavilion.

Basil Morrison happily recalled William Smith who was popularly known as 'Pike' and specialised in English grammar, English literature, religious studies, and business studies. One of his habits was to walk up and down between the desks while peeling an apple and explaining some important aspect of the English language, in such a way that the peel of the whole apple would be carefully preserved, never unbroken and dangling to the floor in one piece! William was undoubtedly a man for whom most of the boys had the highest respect and affection due to his capacity to teach interesting topics, his very good style, his manners, his respect for other people and objects, his integrity, good sportsmanship and religion; sometimes lacking today. He taught these things very simply and painlessly through example.

Pike thought out the school's motto while at Rosehill, *Nisi Deus, Sine Deo, Nihil* (a play on words: 'If there is no God without a God, there is nothing') which complemented the school badge – a plain white fleur-de-lis which stood out on the black school caps which the boys at the Grammar School seemed to envy.

In the 1920s there were about 250 pupils. Across Grange Road was Pimlott's shop, used by the college as a tuck shop, as did Altrincham Prep School later.

William Smith worked with Judge Bradbury and others to extend secondary education in Altrincham. He retired as head of Bowdon College in 1925 but continued as a teacher. The Bowdonian Association of the college marked his retirement with a billiard table with all accessories and furniture and a diamond ring for Mrs Smith. The association congratulated him on running such a successful school when private schools were finding it difficult to survive. In later years he took an active part in local politics.

Their son George William Smith took over the headship with his sisters Barnie and Joan who specialised in classics and English. George did not match up to his father in gaining the respect of his pupils and used the cane a lot. Basil Morrison recalled getting the cane most Saturdays for poor

Algebra. He was sent to select a cane from six which varied from thin to thick and to wait by the usual radiator where he pre-heated his hands to minimise pain.

William died in 1933 and George decided to close the school in 1935. A. W. Cowburn, who had two sons at the school, purchased the building and converted it to ten apartments.

The college had a close link with Altrincham Grammar School for Boys and parents from both schools appealed to AGSB headmaster Mr Walter Hamblin for help. Four of his senior teachers William Crabb, Arthur Hill, Edward Mason and Alexander Sherriffs founded a junior school for 5 to 11 year old boys and a limited company was formed with shareholders including Lord Stamford and Messrs. Hamblin, Crabb, Hill, Mason and Sherriffs. Altrincham Preparatory School opened in September 1936 in part of the college building with 23 pupils. At that time Edward Mason was still a senior maths teacher and deputy head teacher at AGSB but became headmaster of APS in 1946 and his wife Edith taught music and speech. They were a very ambitious and dynamic pair. The school used the gym extension as the assembly hall with classrooms over the top and a new staircase on the west side. In 1950 APS bought Highbury, a Victorian girls' school in West Road which currently houses the infants. In 1997 they built a new junior school on Marlborough Road and in 2013 took over the old Bowdon Preparatory School buildings on Stamford Road.

One of the pupils who attended the Bowdon College was local scouter and amateur flying and racing car enthusiast Harry Killick, who was there before WWI.

Ashley Cricket Club have records of matches with Bowdon College in 1899 and 1900.

Finally a snapshot from the Victorian era: the 1882 book *Beauties of Shakespeare* by the Rev. W. Dodd was recently for sale on eBay at £70. It contains the following inscription: "Prize for Best Influence and Fellowship award to Ford Smith by the Masters and Boys of Bowdon College, July 1892, W. M. Smith, Headmaster." The book cover is in gilded, tooled leather with the Bowdon College emblem on the front.

Bowdon College was demolished in 1998 and College Flats built on the site. Pike's adjacent house, The Oak, was retained at that time but later replaced by a modern house. Opposite on South Downs Road is a commemorative bench to Ted and Edie Mason provided by their step-daughter Barbara Bale (née Bayman).

*Altrincham Preparatory  
School (Altrincham Area  
Image Archive)*



### **Acknowledgments**

Alec Jeakins for details of his great-uncle John Whitehead.  
The late Basil Morrison for his recollections of 'Pike'.

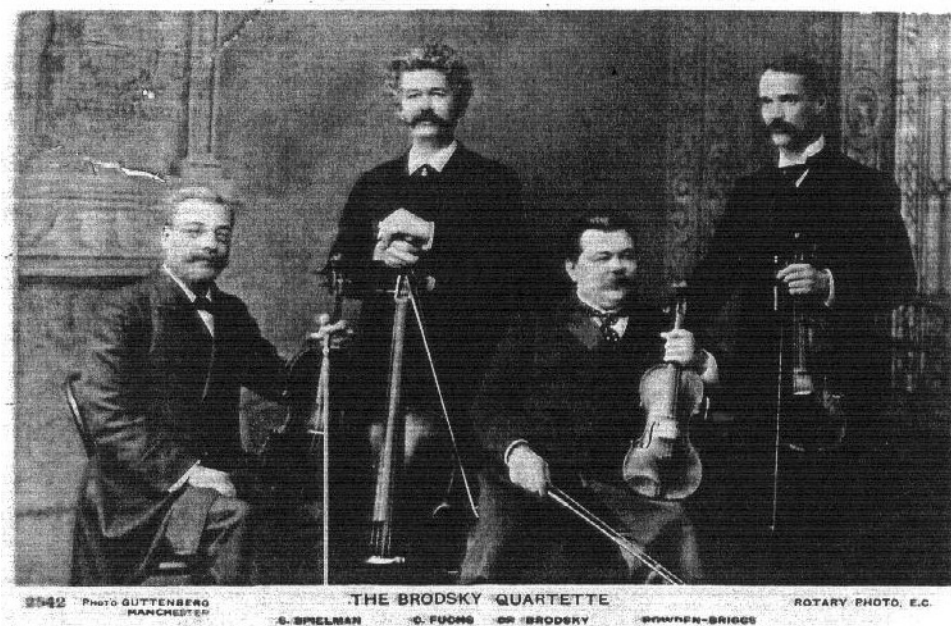
### **Sources**

*Altrincham Guardian*, March 20 1925.  
Altrincham Preparatory School website.  
*Guardian Year Book for 1912*.  
Myra Kendrick, *Victorian Schools in Bowdon*, 1996.  
*Stamford Papers* in John Rylands Library:  
    building ground 78, 4 August 1870 (EGR14/13/3/61).  
    building ground 101, 31 December 1875 (EGR14/13/3/82).

There are also copies of the college magazine *The Bowdonian* in the Cheshire Record Office with the college history in the December 1928 issue (not investigated).

## An Unexpected Connection With Bowdon's Musical Greats

by Chris Hill



*The second Brodsky Quartet with Simon Spielman (conductor), Carl Fuchs (cello), Adolf Brodsky (violin), and Christopher Rawdon Briggs (violin).*

While I was attending one of Andrew Wilde's piano recitals to benefit the Young Musicians Trust, in the post-recital discussions Adolf Brodsky was mentioned and a couple offered me a picture of this great violinist. There is a Blue Plaque on the house where he lived in Richmond Road. When the postcard came, it depicting the 'Brodsky Quartet', consisting of S. Spielman, C. Fuchs, Dr. Brodsky and C. Rawdon Briggs. Like Andrew Wilde, the Brodsky Quartet played to raise money for needy musicians and over 23 years collected £2000. The reverse of the postcard was also of particular interest. The card was from Brodsky himself to Mrs. Behrens at 'Holly Royde' (the venue for many musical soirées), 30 Palatine Road, Withington, posted 19 April 1904. The message was in German. The name Behrens struck a chord with me, as I remembered the name occurring in a list of participants of 'Musical Evenings in Bowdon', the subject of a book which is one of the Treasures left to our History Society by Mrs Daintree, a late member. Miss. D. Behrens, presumably the daughter of Gustav, contributed to several 'evenings' giving pianoforte solos and duets and also vocal items. She also gave a talk on Schumann during one of the musical evenings, held



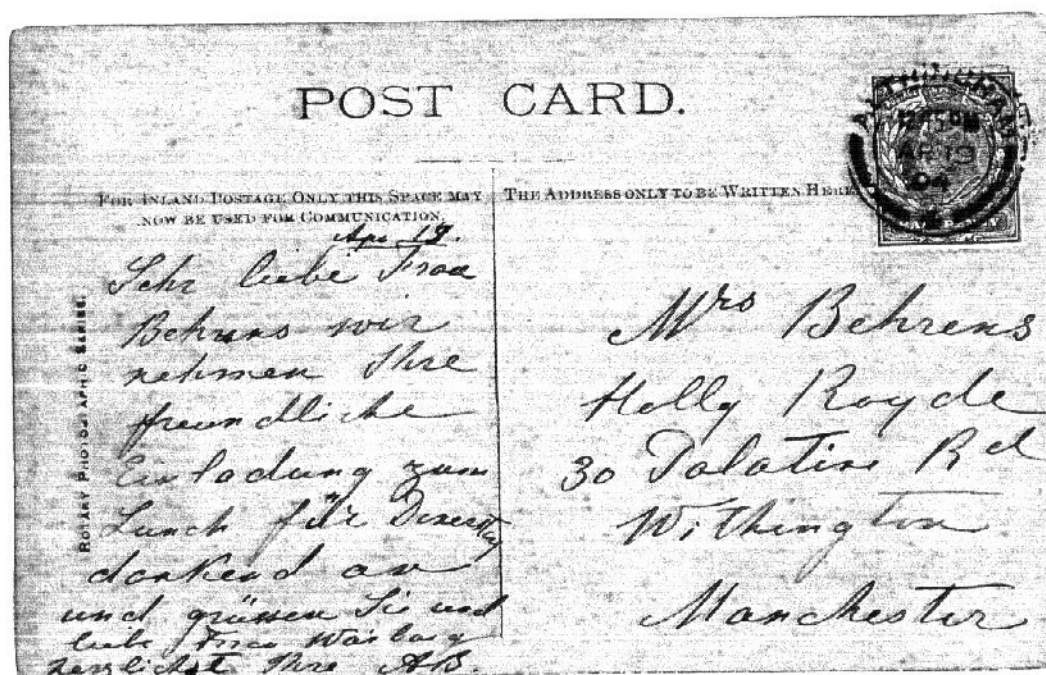
on 12 December 1905, at 'Woodleigh', a house on the corner of Suffolk Road and Harrington Road. In more recent times, a Mr. Tombs, an architect who had offices in Manchester, lived at 'Woodleigh' and I, along with other youngsters, used to visit the house to cut stamps from the office mail, which were then packaged and sold to raise money for a some worthy cause connected with the Hale Road Baptist Church of which Mr. Tombs was a member.

Miss. Behrens lived at 'Holmacre', just opposite 'Woodleigh' (a grade II listed building) and during the War both houses were used to billet evacuees. Because this included children who were sent to Oldfield Brow Primary School, I became friendly with some, especially with a lad whose surname was Gifford (I think he eventually emigrated to Australia and set up a successful business) and so I was a frequent visitor and remember the house had a large room containing a stage, no doubt once used for musical evenings.

'Woodleigh' is another house which bears a Blue Plaque, designed for the Bowdon Conservation Group by Tom Pitfield, another 'musical great' who lived in East Downs Road.

Brodsky of course was an internationally known violinist who was jointly leader of the Hallé and Principal of the Royal College of Music. However, only two days after landing in England from New York, Hallé, the conductor of the orchestra, had a stroke and died. Brodsky took over his position while the Hallé Concerts Society, chaired by Gustav Behrens, thought that Brodsky was wasting his talent as a violinist by concentrating his attention on conducting and therefore sought to have Hans Richter take up the post of conductor. Four years passed before Hans Richter came to the Hallé in Manchester and took up residence at 'The Firs', on The Firs. Later on, Sir Leonard Behrens became chairman of the Hallé Concerts Society, serving from 1932 to 1974. A frequent visitor to Hans Richter was Edward Elgar whose own house was called 'The Firs'. I wonder which came first?

Another personal connection with 'Woodleigh', was that having learned to play the violin under the tuition of Clarice Dunnington (a Hallé violinist), I accompanied a small group of friends carol singing one Christmas at the big houses in Bradgate and Dorset Roads, sometime during the forties.



## Alfred Tarbolton, Lawyer, Local Councillor & Local Historian

by David Miller

Alfred Tarbolton was an important local historian who lived variously in Hale, Bowdon and Altrincham. He published many booklets on Hale and fought for Hale's autonomy in local government.

William Alfred Tarbolton was born in Chorlton-on-Medlock on 14 April 1861, the son of G. S. Tarbolton who was a partner in a transport firm, after which his parents moved to Whalley Range, probably from Hull where GS had changed his name from Tarbotham. He was educated privately, articled as a solicitor in 1878 and was admitted in 1883. He became a partner in the Manchester firm of Brett, Hamilton and Tarbolton. In 1902 he was made a Justice of the Peace, a post he held for 30 years and Honorary Secretary and later a President of the Manchester Law Society, which society he served for 33 years. He became Commissioner of Income Tax for the Altrincham District.

In 1883 Alfred married Hannah Elizabeth Jones, another solicitor and the daughter of T. E. Jones, also a solicitor, and in 1885 they moved to Hale.

In 1887 Hale Parish Council resolved to work towards local autonomy. In 1898 ratepayers met at the Bleeding Wolf public house, Ashley Heath and a committee was appointed including Alfred to co-operate with the Parish Council. In 1899 he was appointed gas lighting inspector for Hale and was elected as the first chairman of Hale Urban District Council in 1900. He was responsible for preserving many of the old council records from the 17th to the 20th century, which are now in the Chester Record Office. He campaigned to change the name of his local village from Peel Causeway to the more ancient name of Hale, and to preserve its independence from Altrincham.

According to various directories, in 1886 the Tarboltons rented The Lodge, 247 Ashley Road, Hale from William Owen, architect and surveyor who lived at 249. They then lived at Elmhurst, 24 South Downs Road, Ashley Heath from 1898 to 1903. In 1903 he bought land from the Stamford estate and built Athelney (presumably making a link with King Arthur's castle in Somerset), South Downs Road which is in the Arts & Crafts style. Initially he attended Bowdon Downs Church but moved to St. Johns and held various posts there. In 1911 the Tarboltons moved to Altrincham and were living at The Manor House, Woodlands Road, Altrincham in 1929 and attended St. George's Church. Altrincham Methodist Church is on the site of this house.

Alfred Tarbolton became interested in the nursing movement and was Vice-President and Chairman of the Altrincham and District Nursing Association from 1909 to 1922. He took a keen interest in local history and was an exceptional researcher. He was also a poet. After a bad start spending some years searching for the mythical 'Farmer Peel' he did much to preserve the history of the development of Peel Causeway and Hale. He interviewed some of the older people from Hale and produced several publications including *The Handy Book for Hale* (1900), *Local Government in Hale* (1907 in the Altrincham Guardian), *Chapters for Hale Fellows* (1908 in the Altrincham Guardian), *The History of Hale Methodist Church*, *Local Government in Hale* (1908), *Records of Hale* (1921, originally published in the Altrincham Guardian in 1908), *Ringway Chapel Before the Disruption 1515-1721* (1923, after publication in the Altrincham Guardian of that year), *The Renaissance of Hale* (1925) and *The Story of Peel Causeway* (1929). He also lectured on the subject and in 1932 was working on a book on the

complete history of Hale from Saxon times to the 1920s, the draft of which is in the Chester Record Office in two volumes (LUH4/1) and which was based on Chapters for Hale Fellows and his other works.

In their final years the Tarboltons lived at the original Brooklands Hotel, Brooklands, now demolished. Alfred Tarbolton died on 4 June 1934 and his death is registered at Manchester, reference 8d/102. He has a road in Hale named after him.

The Tarboltons had a daughter Lillas Una born in 1886 who married Captain Archibald James Hepburn in 1911 and they had children Patricia (1912-2007) and Philip Archibald (1915-1993). Captain Hepburn was killed at Gallipoli in 1915 and Una died in 1938 and is buried in Hale Cemetery.

Tarbolton is a unique surname and there were only 37 in the 1901 census. However there appear to be no Tarboltons in the UK currently. There is a small town near Ayr called Tarbolton, which is presumably where the name originated. The town is famous for its Robbie Burns connection where he lived about 1780, and for the Bachelors Club.

With thanks Philip Hepburn for details of his great-grandfather Alfred Tarbolton.

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