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Contents:

Juliana Ewing's Bowdon Years by Myra Kendrick

A Bowdon Aviation Pioneer by John Chartres

Watling Street (Part 1) by Ronald Trenbath



This toll house marked the southern end of the portion of the turnpike which passed through Bowdon in the Eighteenth Century.

JULIANA EWING'S BOWDON YEARS by Myra Kendrick

Juliana Horatia Ewing, nee Gatty, (1841 to 1885), a successful and respected writer for children, actually lived for a short time at what is now known as 14 Higher Downs, Altrincham, and was then Downs Villa, High Downs, Bowdon. In May 1877 she moved from Aldershot to Bowdon to join her husband, Major Alexander Ewing of the Army Pay Department, who had been posted to Manchester. The residence was short indeed, as in September 1878, on her husband's being transferred to York, she moved house again, never to come back to Bowdon. As the early title-deeds of the house were destroyed by fire, we have no means of telling whether the Ewings bought or rented the house, but that they actually lived in it is authenticated by various letter headings. Juliana was the second child in the large family of the Rev. Alfred Gatty, vicar of Ecclesfield near Sheffield.

Her mother, Margaret Gatty, was herself a well-known writer of children's stories and the editor of a children's periodical, *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, in which most of her daughter's work first appeared. But the mother's real interests were scientific: her best known work for children was entitled *Parables from Nature*, and her research and writings on British seaweeds were taken seriously by professional scientists. Margaret Gatty's father, the Rev. Alexander John Scott, born in 1768, deserves mention as having been Lord Nelson's chaplain on the *Victory*, and the admiral's friend. This friendship was commemorated by the Gatty family among the names of several of their children, called Horatio or Horatia according to their sex: hence Juliana's second name. Julie (her family name) was a delicate child with a strong personality and a great love of acting.

Story-telling came naturally to her from childhood, and her mother, who wrote to keep the large family, recognised her daughter's superior gifts. To a modern generation some of Julie's stories read like charming period pieces strongly laced with moral instruction and a touch of sentimentality, but their freshness won the admiration of Tennyson and Kipling as well as Queen Victoria and they attracted famous illustrators: Whymper, George Cruickshank, H.M. Brock and Randolph Caldecott. The title of one of her stories, *The Brownies*, suggested the name for Sir Robert Baden-Powell's junior Girl Guides movement; it is, in fact, about children who learnt to enjoy being helpful by tidying up and doing odd jobs, like the brownies of folk-lore.

Her first publication was *Melchior's Dream and Other Tales* (1862). Other published stories include *A Flat Iron for a Farthing* (1870 to '71) *Jackanapes* (1879), and *The Story of a Short Life* (1882), *Much of We and the World* (1877-9), originally named *We Three*, a story about a boy stowaway who sailed from Liverpool docks, was written at Bowdon, along with some children's verse and another story, *The Gentleman of the Road*, that was never completed. We know that in September 1877 Juliana visited Liverpool from her Bowdon home and saw the Canada Docks, relevant to her story. As *We and the World* was first published, like most of her work, in monthly instalments in *Aunt Judy's Magazine*, Julie's Bowdon period was filled with the pressure of keeping up to date with writing and proof correction.

Mrs Ewing's stories about children are attractive in that her children are real people, talking and behaving naturally, lovable and loved. They are drawn with great sympathy and their relations with adults are sensitively handled. If the author sometimes used her tales to press home certain teaching, such as the temperance theme in her *Lob by the Fire*, and ended some of them with the early death of a young hero, one has to accept the tastes of her time and the high mortality rate among children; she herself lost two brothers in infancy. She wrote from experience: the country village life she knew in her girlhood and the army background of her married years are both reflected in her work. She strove incessantly to achieve a crisp style, which gives her stories a refreshing movement.

In 1867 Juliana had been married to Major Alexander Ewing, "Rexie", who has his own claim to fame in being the composer of the hymn tune now known as Ewing, to which the words "Jerusalem the Golden" were subsequently set. We know that Rexie's piano was among the possessions moved into Downs Villa and a music room was prepared for him there.

Our sources of information for details about their Bowdon residence are her letters and diaries. We know that when she heard of the impending move from Aldershot, which she loved, to unknown Bowdon, it was to Julie "the awful news". Her husband had to go to Manchester ahead of her, and the slight and delicate Julie had the hard task of supervising the move to the house he had found for them. As well as the piano, a considerable collection of "pictures, books and bric-a-brac" had to be transferred safely, which was a great worry to her.

Major Ewing had moved north in March; his wife followed in May and at once began trying to make the villa look like home. She loved gardening, finding it a relaxation from the rigours of writing and publishing, so her first recorded purchase for the house was of pansies bought in Altrincham market for immediate planting in her garden. She did not have to make a new garden, as the house was already twenty-six years old when the Ewings moved in.

On her second day in the house she was arranging with a decorator about papering it. Her taste was for plain walls, but she loved colour. "I have distempered my own little drawing-room pale pink," she wrote to a friend, "have arranged my pictures and knick-knacks and I have invested in two such old carved tables, and a chair of the most ancient date and indescribable quaintness, on which I can sit without dangling (so low is it!) and to which I have put a frilled cushion of pale pink morris chintz which suits its style of beauty exactly!"

Her husband's music room was described as "chiefly given to olive greens"; the bedroom was pale blue and one of the spare rooms had a paper "all dog daisies".

The Ewings, like the Gattys before them, were not well off. Fortunately Julie enjoyed hunting round Altrincham for inexpensive fittings and furniture in pawnbrokers' and second-hand shops. She looked for seasoned wood and drawers that ran well, and seems to have shopped successfully, buying a table for £1 and wardrobes (plural) for £4.

She appears to have settled down in Bowdon and been reasonably happy in spite of very poor health. She soon made a friend of Mrs. Joynson who lived on Richmond Hill and shared her interest in the paintings of their contemporary Paul Naftel, lending Julie some of his paintings to copy. She was, this vicar's daughter, a regular church-goer. She usually attended morning service at St. John's Church, but sometimes went to Bowdon Parish Church for Evensong, Downs Villa being situated about halfway between the two. We hear, too, of attendance at Manchester Cathedral. She and Rexie enjoyed local walks with their dogs, down by the Bollin or in Dunham Park. "Exquisitely lovely" was one comment on the countryside. They visited Manchester for art exhibitions and concerts.

The residence in Bowdon ended abruptly in September, 1878 on Major Ewing's being moved to York. Again Mrs. Ewing had all the responsibility for removal, which did her health no good. That her impressions of Bowdon were not wholly favourable is suggested by a letter she wrote to her husband, then stationed in Malta, while she was staying with friends in her beloved Aldershot: "Said I to myself, 'I've been in wealthy, idle Bowdon and in ecclesiastical York and not had this -'". "This" referred to a well-attended service at the little tin church at Aldershot in which the congregation joined whole-heartedly. She had commented during her December in Bowdon on "smoke coming over from Manchester".

Under the constant moves required by army life, Juliana's health at last broke down completely. She was never able to join her husband in Malta. She died of cancer at the early age of forty-four and was buried at Trull near Taunton, where she had been living latterly. Memorials to her are to be found in the churches at Trull and Ecclesfield where her life began. But Bowdon can be happy to have been for a short time the home of this gifted and lovable woman writer.

A BOWDON AVIATION PIONEER **by John Chartres**

Many distinguished airmen, aircraft designers and engineers have lived in Bowdon (or just down the road in Hale) including the bearers of such names as Leeming, Killick and Chadwick.

One whose name has not so far received much public recognition was Benjamin Graham Wood, whose last home was 'The Coppice', South Downs Road, Bowdon. The late Mr. Wood, who was a student of civil engineering at the Regent Street Polytechnic in 1909 and who became interested in aviation at the time of Bleriot's cross-Channel flight, designed and partly built a projected man-powered 'rotary ornithopter'.

His machine, recovered in parts from his home with the help of his daughter, Mrs. Ruth Middleton, is being re-assembled at the Manchester Air and Space Museum and will probably be put on display there early next year (1986). It has been registered as No. BAPC 182 by the British Aircraft Preservation Council. When men first aspired to fly they studied both the flight patterns of birds and insects and also the movement of air bubbles. The latter line of study resulted in the first successful flights by men (and women) in balloons and airships — "lighter-than-air" craft.

The examination of birds' and insects' principles took longer to culminate in flight by men in 'heavier-than-air' craft. Those who wanted to emulate the flapping movement of birds' wings in "ornithopters" never did achieve their object; and those who favoured the partial rotary movement of insect wings had to wait a long time until suitable lightweight materials and engines became available to make autogyros and helicopters practical.

Those who concentrated on the gliding movement of such birds as gulls with their wings outstretched and still, succeeded first. Wilbur and Orville Wright added a new dimension at the turn of the 20th century by adding an engine and propeller to a glider design.

Graham Wood, who at one stage was the Chief Designer of the British Airship Company, always believed that a flying machine could be constructed combining the principles of the rotary-winged autogyros* and helicopters with that of the bird's ability to flap its wings to gain lift. Mr. Wood was no dilettante in such matters — in 1909 he had built and flown his own glider, he taught aviation theory until 1914 and he was awarded the 171st British Aviator's Certificate.

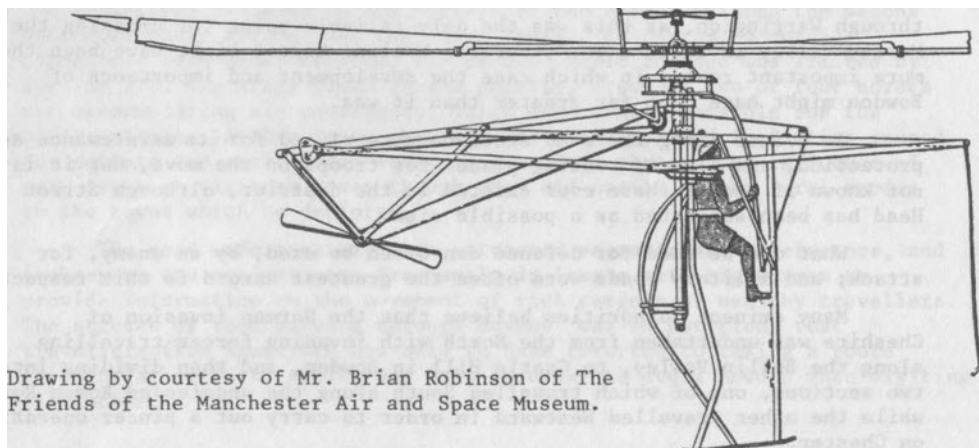
He set about proving his "rotary ornithopter" theory (combining the principles of rotating and flapping wings) in pursuit of the "Kremer Prize" for man-powered flight which was offered in the 1960s. In a thesis on the subject he wrote:

"Helicopters on average lift 10lbs per Horse Power and require 40 to 50 h.p. for each man lifted.

"Birds fly upwards fairly continuously at about 5 feet a second and much more quickly for short periods. For this performance a bird weighing one lb uses only one hundredth of a Horse Power and is therefore ten times as efficient as the average helicopter."

"Birds have the advantage of wing tip propulsion and also the advantage of intermittent support which has hitherto not been used on helicopters; but birds share with helicopters the disadvantage of a very adverse leverage which explains the excessive power requirement of helicopters as previously developed. My machine is a rotary ornithopter (a new classification)."

Graham Wood died before completing his machine or being able to attempt to fly it. The parts, mainly constructed from bamboo and nylon fabric remained in the garage at "The Coppice" however, and Mrs. Middleton and her son have been able to salvage them and hand them over to experts from the Manchester Air and Space Museum.



*There is still some confusion over the definitions of autogyros and helicopters. The former use rotating wings which 'freewheel' usually in the slipstream of a conventional forward-thrusting propeller, Sometimes completely freely after having been towed by land vehicles or ships. Helicopters have power delivered directly to their main rotor blades. The spelling 'autogyro' (with a 'y') is correct. The word "Autogiro" (with a capital 'A' and an 'i') is a Registered Trade Name applicable only to the products and designs of the company founded by the Spanish-born pioneer, the late Juan De La Cierva.

WATLING STREET, BOWDON

by Ronald Trenbath

The development, and often the existence, of a community depends upon communications, and Bowdon has been no exception to this rule. The construction of the Roman Road, the Bridgewater Canal in 1762, the Railway in the 1840's, Ringway Airport in the 1930's and the Motorway in 1971 has each in its way had a profound effect upon Bowdon.

The road known variously as the main Chester Road, Dunham Road and Watling Street was built by the Romans as a military link between Deva (Chester) and Mamucium (Manchester) and probably followed an ancient trackway between settlements realigned to provide long stretches of straight roadway. Originally the road by-passed the settlement which later became Altrincham and followed a straight line from a point where Denzell now stands to a position which is now Broadheath, but at a later period it was diverted through Altrincham and the straight portion of the road was eventually lost, although contours in the undergrowth in Dunham Park indicate its original position.

The main Roman artery north to Scotland was King Street which ran through Warrington, as this was the only reliable point for crossing the Mersey Valley in those days, otherwise Watling Street might have been the more important route, in which case the development and importance of Bowdon might have been far greater than it was. At points along the road stations were placed for its maintenance and protection, and also as resting places for troops on the move, but it is not known if one of these ever existed in the district, although Street Head has been suggested as a possible site.

These Roman roads were built to last and were still in use in the Middle Ages when their maintenance and repair became the responsibility of the adjoining landowners who so neglected their duties that the Highway Act of 1555 was enacted, requiring each parish to undertake this work, upon pain of fine for each parishioner in the event of failure so to do. They were also obliged to elect an honorary surveyor from among their fellows to supervise all such work.

Under the later Stuarts the increase in commerce brought greater traffic on to the roads but as this consisted mainly of travellers passing through the district local residents were resentful at having to provide facilities for strangers, with no hope of any return on their outlay, and petitions were often made to the Quarter Sessions about this injustice. In fact Defoe suggested that a national levy of £3,000 for eight years should be made to rectify the situation. The final remedy came from local private initiative when turnpike trusts were created in Cheshire, with Parliamentary powers to erect toll-gates or bars and charge fees for using the roads in return for providing satisfactory facilities for travelling. As a result of this, toll-gates were built at the Rostherne-Millington crossroad and at Ashton-on-Mersey.

These toll-gates were often provided with keepers' cottages of architectural interest designed in either the Classical, Gothick or Cottage Ornee taste. The one at Rostherne was eventually acquired by the Cheshire Constabulary for the use of the local policeman, but it was demolished for a road widening scheme between the wars. Watling Street originally forded the River Bollin at a point near Castle Hill, but it was realigned in the last century nearer to St. John-of-Jerusalem's Patch in order that a bridge could be built for easier crossing. The area became known as New Bridge Hollow.

Pack horses plied the road carrying goods between towns, but as they were very slow and difficult to overtake they caused great annoyance to other travellers. Pickfords first used pack horses to deliver silk from their Macclesfield mills in the middle of the 17th century, but they soon replaced them with trading wagons which were more efficient in every way, and could accommodate passengers.

The chime of bells on the collars of the horses pulling the wagons announced their arrival and they were always, by custom, accorded precedence over other traffic, but in 1663 their tonnage was limited by law. By 1750 the stage coach became popular, drawn by two or four horses and accommodating six passengers, which made travel possible for the middle classes. Arthur Young observed that the improved facilities opened new markets and enabled new ideas to circulate through the influence of more frequent visitors, even though they did assist in the rural exodus to the towns which he deplored.

The road unfortunately also attracted vagrants and malefactors, and innkeepers and ostlers were frequently in league with highwaymen to provide information on the movement of rich cargoes or wealthy travellers. The stretch of road passing through Bowdon was so notorious that travellers from Knutsford are said to have resorted to taking a route through Tatton Park, Ashley and Hale in order to avoid Bowdon when visiting Altrincham.

Perhaps the worst of these criminals was Edward Higgins of Knutsford whose exploits, even as far as Bristol, are very well known, and it was because of this violence that red-coated guards with blunderbusses travelled on the stage coaches.

Watling Street again became an invasion route in 1745 when the Jacobites passed through Bowdon, en route for Derby, and it is reported that the local inhabitants hid their horses among the trees along the Bollin in order that they should not be stolen by the insurgents. Inns along the road catered for the requirements of travellers, and while any man could open a house, hostlers and herbergers were required to sell food at a reasonable price. Later Licensing Acts, however, laid down that inn-keepers should provide lodgings for travellers, tavern-keepers victuals but no shelter, and alehouses only liquor for local inhabitants.

Inns were also supposed to provide guests with clean sheets, and landlords of the Swan Inn always boasted that Charles Stuart the Pretender had complimented the proprietor of the day upon the standard of the bed linen when he stayed there in 1745.

During the next half of the 18th century travel became very fashionable, whether by post-chaise, phaeton, on horse-back or even on foot, although foot passengers were considered to be inferior and were subjected to discrimination and could only be served with refreshments in a kitchen. Most of the inns such as The Unicorn in Altrincham, and the Swan at Bucklow had livery stables, and were often changing stations with facilities for changing horses at regular distances in order to ensure high speed travel, although this was very expensive.

It is recorded that Richard Trenbath set off from Bowdon for London on January 16th, 1771, at the age of twelve, with "Mr. Heywood, Preston carrier, who inns at The Swan with Two Nicks in Lad Lane in London", presumably to be articled or apprenticed. His father, William, followed on his horse a few days later, having first sent letters to his uncle to arrange the visit, and in his account book he noted that he had replenished the powder and "shot" for his pistol (1/4d) and paid between 2d and 6d at each turnpike, which were numerous.

During other journeys William recorded paying 4d for crossing the river at Twickenham, 1/6d for shoeing and bleeding his horse at Bath, 1/- for new spurs and 3/6d for a whip. The importance of improved travel facilities for the purpose of shopping is illustrated by one visit to London when he purchased a gilet and portmanteau, blacking, pins, powder, wig "oyl", writing paper, clothes brush, two pairs of stockings, and a pound of tea, and also had a cloak bag mended, his wig adjusted, shoes repaired and a shirt and "wastcoat" made and paid 6d to a porter from St. James to carry them to his lodgings. Similarly on his visits to Chester he would often make household purchases, as he noted when he directed Mr. John Meakins of North Gate Street, to kill and prepare a pig for him. He also drew attention to casualties arising from road accidents at this time, when he recorded the death of a Mr. Swan as a result of a fall from his horse.
(To be continued).

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