

The Bowdon Sheaf

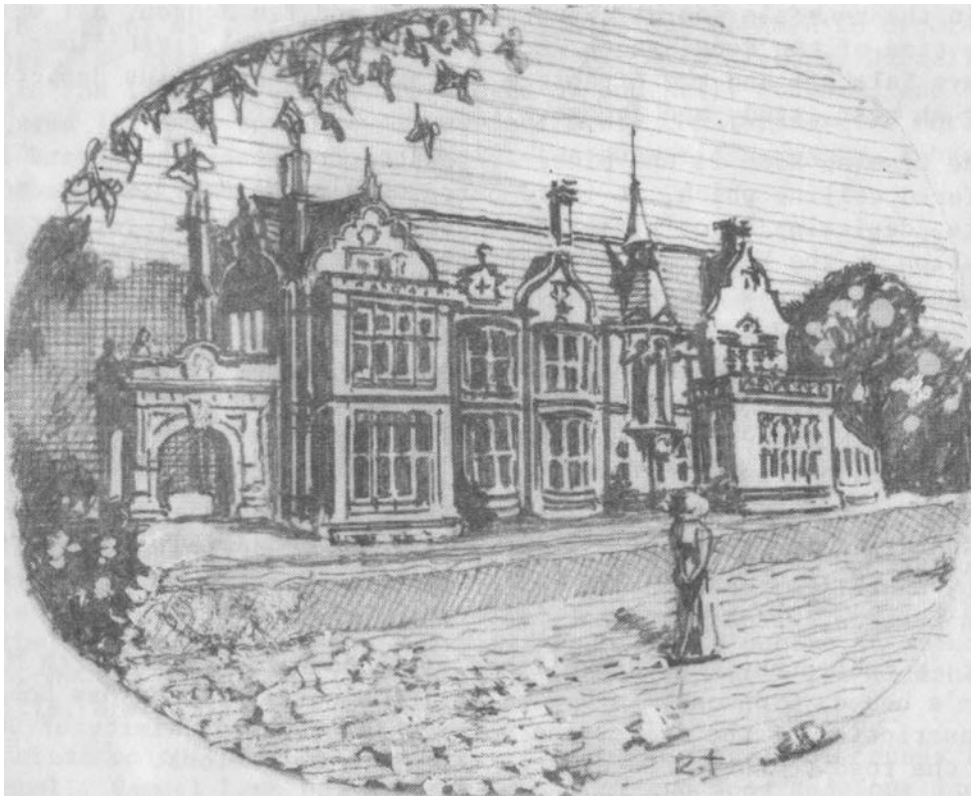
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Denzell: A mid-nineteenth century gentleman's residence in Bowdon.

DENZELL (continued)
by Valerie Trenbath

The novelty of Northern European Gothic and Renaissance architecture influenced many Victorian architects in the nineteenth century who erected buildings inspired by these sources, of which locally we have Waterhouse's Town Hall in Knutsford, influenced by Dutch Renaissance, his Eaton Hall, based on French Renaissance, Lynn's Town Hall in Chester, with strong French-Flemish influence and John Douglas's French Chateau at Eccleston, none of which has been dealt with satisfactorily by either critics or historians. The purpose of this article is not to justify or glamorise what is potentially debased architectural composition, but to accord it an interest hitherto ignored.

The interior of Denzell is as interesting as the exterior, with many features worthy of consideration. A screen which divides the hall from the vestibule is glazed with yellow and sepia glass, illustrating Elizabeth I at Tilbury and on a journey to Kenilworth, and has a marked similarity to the old glass work in the library at Dunham Massey Hall.

The fireplace is inspired by French-Flemish design with interesting blue tiles, while the wooden ceiling, although rather crude, is in keeping with the design and period of the fireplace. The staircase which forms part of the oriel window (previously mentioned) is glazed with stained glass depicting the figures of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, while that in the roundels depicts Spenser, Bacon and Ben Jonson, all writers at the time of the Renaissance. A small window on the first floor landing portrays Falstaff and the fireplace contains coloured tiles depicting Labour at rest, study and repose.

The Drawing Room is the piece-de-resistance of this house and has a coffered ceiling which, it is rumoured, was painted by imported Italian artists, depicting Aesop's fables, a very popular subject for interior decoration in the Victorian era, and should be compared with similar paintings at Burgess's Castell Coch near Cardiff.

The ceiling of the billiards and smoking room is also of some interest as it is painted to show pictures of draughts, dice, cards, snooker, billiards and pipes, circumscribed by the motto "Play not for gain, who plays for more than he can lose with pleasure stakes his heart, perhaps his wife too, and whom she hath bore", a salutary warning against gambling. It would be of considerable interest to know if the original furnishings of Denzell matched the design of the house, similar to Rothschild's French Chateau, Waddesden Manor, in Buckinghamshire.

It is noteworthy that Denzell has often been identified with Mr. Oldham's house, Grosmont, in Howard Spring's novel *All the Day Long*, from the description of the drive, the portcochere, the proximity of Dunham Park, the road to Knutsford and the Cornish associations.

Erratum

In the first part of the article on Denzell in the *Bowdon Sheaf* No 7, April, 1986, the words "the Gothic Oriel window and turret, supported on an asbestos column" should read "the Gothic oriel window and, turret supported on an alabaster column". We regret this error.

DENZELL OWNERS & OCCUPIERS by Marjorie Cox

In 1874 the new journal, *The British Architect*, began a series of articles on 'Country Mansions of Manchester', a category into which Denzell fits. Such a house, in between a large villa and a 'palace of the nobility' was for a 'Manchester man' who had acquired the means of living. in a mansion and in prosperous Manchester of the mid-nineteenth century there were many such. Although the 6th Earl of Stamford had been reluctant to sell land on Green Walk so near his park, his grandson, the 7th Earl, sold large plots in the 1860s to such Manchester men as T.H. Gaddum and Spencer Bickham, whose 'mansions', Oakley and Bickham House, still stand. The ten acres on which Denzell stands were sold in 1874 by the 7th Earl to Robert Scott of 56 Mosley Street, Manchester, a spinning manufacturer.

Not much is known of him, but he was the son of a farmer and was born at Abbey Holm, Cumberland, in 1822. Presumably he came to Manchester to make his fortune in the cotton industry, for, at the time of his marriage at St. Luke's, Cheetham Hill, he was a salesman. By the time he built Denzell he was a man of considerable wealth and ready for a 'mansion', for the house cost £18,000 to build, (reputedly as much as £30,000 in all) and in 1881 he and his wife were living there with a staff of nine servants. The origin of the name Denzell is a mystery, but it has been suggested that it is Cornish: certainly Maria Scott, Robert's wife, was born at St Marago in Cornwall. Scott employed the well-known firm of Manchester architects, Clegg and Knowles, to design the house, (the brickwork was by James Hamilton) and, it is said, imported Italian workmen to decorate ceilings. The grand style in which he and his wife lived at Denzell is shown in the 1881 census: he, then aged 59 and still at work; and his wife, aged 71, were served by a resident staff consisting of a butler, and under-butler, a cook, a housemaid, two domestic servants, a head-gardener, a coachman and a groom.

Robert Scott, who is recorded at Denzell in the 1878 local street directory, disappeared from it after 1904, and Denzell was on the market in 1904. The new owner, who appears in the 1905 directory, was Samuel Lamb, a wealthy shipper of the firm of Coddington and Lamb of Peter Street, Manchester, which he in fact ran from the turn of the century. The firm's chief commodity was cotton goods and they had cotton mills in Lancashire, Rumania and the Argentine. Later, when shipping declined, they started a Patent Knitting Company in Droylsden, making underwear.

Samuel Lamb attended the very live and influential Bowdon Downs Congregational Church and was a generous supporter of Congregationalism and also of Liberalism: Denzell was the scene of garden fetes in aid of both causes. Under Mr. Lamb the garden was a feature of Denzell — he left the house much as it was — and was open to the public at weekends. The hot-houses had vines, peaches and orchids, in which the gardener, Mr. Ellis, specialised.

Whereas no children of Robert Scott appear in the 1881 census living at Denzell, Samuel Lamb had a large family of two sons and four daughters, which in those days needed a large domestic establishment — butler, parlour maid, lady's maid, serving maid, cook, kitchen maid and house maid, and outside, head and under-gardener and head and under- coachman, later chauffeur. The staff (and their children) formed a community and group photographs of them exist taken at Denzell and at Abberley Hall, Worcestershire, the rented country house in which for seven years the Lambs spent their summer holidays, taking their staff with them.

As in many of the older Bowdon families philanthropy played a large part in the lives of the Lamb family. A photograph of Samuel Lamb shows him in the midst of a crowd of children on holiday in North Wales at his expense. His daughter, Grace, did voluntary work in Ancoats and many local people will remember the charitable works of Miss Sybil Lamb, incidentally a pupil of Culcheth School.

Samuel Lamb died in December, 1936 leaving lavish bequests to various Congregational Church organisations. After his death Denzell changed from private to public ownership, for his children, Mr C.J. and Miss Sybil Lamb gave the house and its grounds to the then local authority, Bowdon Urban District Council, in memory of their parents. The Council welcomed the offer of the grounds as a park, but was much exercised about a use for the house: it was too large for the Council offices and there was even talk of demolition. A combination of vision, chance and individual initiative led to the realisation at Denzell of the idea, new then in England, of a residential adult education college. The vision was that of Ross D. Waller, appointed Director of Extra-Mural Studies at Manchester University in 1937. Professor, as he later became, Waller lived in Bowdon at that time and describes in his short book, *Residential College*, the process which transformed Denzell. One of the chances was that the gardener at the house next door to his was the Chairman of Bowdon Urban District Council, the new owners of Denzell.

The University felt unable to take over the house officially, but the enthusiasts (prominent among them Mrs Waller) decided in March, 1938 to form a limited liability company and mobilised voluntary support in money, kind and labour especially from prospective students. Miss Lamb offered £150 a year for three years for resident caretakers and Bowdon Urban District Council charged only a nominal rent. It was represented on the Council of Management and stipulated that the Guild should provide teas for people using the grounds, which was done in the conservatory. The name, the Lamb Guildhouse, assumed by many to refer to the Lamb family, is revealed by Professor Waller to derive from Paschal lamb, emblematic of Christian hope and purpose, on the heraldic shield designed for the Guildhouse by Mrs Waller.

In June 1938 Denzell opened in its new capacity for a Whitsuntide weekend school. By December over 300 people had stayed there on weekend courses. Although there had been some objections in the correspondence columns of the *Altrincham and Bowdon Guardian* to this supposed threat to 'the peaceful seclusion of Bowdon', there was considerable local support and local people attended the lectures given by such noted figures as C. Day Lewis, L.A.G. Strong, Ashley Dukes, F.S. Sladen-Smith and Cyril Ray.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 Bowdon Council required Denzell as an evacuation centre for expectant mothers. The Lamb Guildhouse, however, remained in Bowdon for a time, as Mrs E. Lamb offered her house on The Firs, Newington, as temporary premises. After the war the Lamb Guildhouse as such disappeared, though the Association continued, and the official University residential adult education college was eventually located at Holly Royde in Withington not in a country suburb. Denzell from 1946 was leased by the local authority and opened as an annexe to Altrincham General Hospital in 1949: it remains in use under the regional health authority.

The chief sources on which this article is based are *The Builder*, Vol 39, the 1881 census, reminiscences of Mr George Evans and R.D. Waller, *Residential College*.

LOCAL SALTWORKINGS IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
by Hazel Pryor

Recent research by Hazel Pryor shows that some salt was being manufactured in Dunham Massey in the early seventeenth century. Notes from the ledger kindly made available to her by the National Trust, in the Silver Collection Room in Dunham Massey Hall. "Abstract of Deeds etc....1714 record:"

9 August, Chas (1633)

For £200 paid. George Bowdon of Bowdon and Elinor his wife and William Bowdon grant to Christopher Anderton a parcel of land - 2 acres called Bendeye in Dunham by Bollyn River and all the Salt Springs therein, and a close of 2 acres called Hermitts Faughe in Dunham and a parcel of land in Dunham cont. 143 yards in length and 7 yards Breadth with a lane leading along one side of the Little Broadfield and Hermitts Faughe for conveniency of passage with Salt. - for 3 lives at £3 rent. - and after to Raphe Heaton for 99 years at £3 rent with power to the said George Bowdon.and his heirs to erect 2 salt pans for his won use and to have the Herbage of the lands.

7 Oct

Deed and Recovery of the above to Hugh Rigby and Ralph Worthington.

14 August, 11 Chas (1635)

Assigned back to William Booth (was to raise a portion of £1,000 for his daughters - paid in 1649)

26 December 1650

For £300 - William Bowdon to George Booth - the capital messuage in Bowdon called Bowdon Hall and all lands in Bowdon. 26 March 1651 (as 26 December 1650) Plus the Bendeye in Dunham and the Saltworks therein - Refs to:- Hermitts Faughe and the Little Broadfield.

30 April, 1651

Confirmed

11 July 1655

A message in tenancy of Even Evens including Bendeye and Little Broadfield as then marked out (+ ref. to Hermitts Faughe). George Booth grants to William Bowdon the said premises - forever - with proviso - to be void if any salt works be suffered to be erected therein.

(No further references).

TRAVELLING THROUGH BOWDON in 1689
by Celia Fiennes

Celia Fiennes, the daughter of a Cromwellian Colonel and distant relative of George Booth, second Earl of Warrington, travelled through Bowdon in 1689, when she recorded:

"Thence I went a very pleasant road much on the Downs most champion ground some few enclosures; I went by Dunham Massey the Earl of Warrington's house which stands in a very fine park. It stands low but appeared very well to sight, its old fashioned building which appears more in the inside and the furniture, old but good gardens walled in". The term 'champion ground' refers to champaign which was open and unenclosed ground.

Celia Fiennes also described salt workings which could have applied to Dunham Woodhouses.

"I came to the town (Northwich), it is not very large, its full of Salt works the brine pitts being all here and about so they make all things convenient to follow the making of salt, so that the town is full of smoak from the salterns on all side; they have within these few years found in their brine pitts a hard Rocky salt that looks cleer like sugar candy, and its taste shews it to be Salt, they call this Rock salt, it will make very good brine with fresh water to use quickly".

Nearly 300 years later, on October 3rd 1983, Sir Ranulph Fiennes, addressing the Sixty Club at Bowdon Assembly Rooms, concerning his Arctic and Antarctic Expeditions, quoted the nursery rhyme

"Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross to see a Fiennes lady on a white horse." Celia Fiennes was the lady referred to.

THOMAS WALTON, GENT
by Ronald Trenbath

Thomas Walton, of Dunham Wood Houses, who died on February 6th, 1757, leaving property in Bowdon, Dunham Massey and Altrincham and salt refining equipment in the local salt works, gave to his executors, by a Will dated August 22nd, 1754, the sum of £1,000 for charitable uses within the township of Dunham Massey, but this bequest was extended to include Bowdon and Altrincham under a codicil dated August 23rd 1755, when the residue of his estate was also left to charity.

George, Earl of Warrington, Mary, Countess of Stamford, Lord Grey and the Honourable Booth Grey were named as executors of the Will but all of them declined to act except for the Countess, who proved the Will in the Ecclesiastical Court of the diocese of Chester, and undertook the execution of its provisions.

Money from the estate was to be used to provide sheets and blankets for the poor of Dunham Massey every year and for the poor of Bowdon and Altrincham in alternate years, while the sum of £20 was to be spent on woollen and linen cloth for the poor of Dunham Massey only. Walton expressed a wish during his lifetime that provisions should be made for the education of local children, and the Countess took it as part of her duties, as executrix, to fulfil this wish.

A plot of waste land at Little Heath, rented at 5/- from the manor of Dunham Massey, provided a site for a building consisting of a schoolroom, a kitchen, and bed-chamber for the schoolmistress, and other convenient Offices.

The development cost £207. 2s. leaving a balance of £792. 18s from the original £1,000 legacy which was placed "on real or government securities" in order that the interest could pay the ground rent, the schoolmistress's salary and "to find firing and books and other implements for use of school". On July 8th 1760, a trust deed was signed and a receipt endorsed for the balance of the legacy which was put on bond to John Jackson Esq, Great Queen Street, London, at 4% per annum.

The Countess was responsible for selecting a fit person to keep account of receipts and disbursements and general state of the school, and the owners of Dunham Massey Estate were to be responsible for appointing the schoolmistress, paying her salary and discharging her at their own will and pleasure.

Provision was made for the selection of pupils between the ages of 3 and 7, and for their expulsion if necessary, and if insufficient poor children were available places were to be made available for fee-paying Pupils.

Boys were taught to read but girls were also taught to knit, spin and to "work plain work", and all of them were taught the catechism by heart and had prayers morning and evening. They were examined at quarter day every year, or oftener if thought fit, and no fires were allowed in the schoolroom between May 1st and October 1st. A plaque over the entrance doors records "Thomas Walton, Gent" as the benefactor.

In 1759 further money from Walton's estate was used to found a school at Oldfield House at Seamons Moss on the north side of Dunham Park. £2,000 was spent on the property and £5241-13s-2d invested in 3%, Reduced Bank Annuities to provide for the instruction of 40 boys from Bowdon and Altrincham as well as Dunham Massey. The master was paid a salary of £60, but this was reduced by £20 to cover expenses incurred by his private, fee-paying pupils.

In 1867 the school was transferred to a newly-erected building on the opposite side of Oldfield Lane, and Oldfield House was converted into a private residence, the revenue from which formed an endowment so that the number of pupils could be increased to 90. During the following hundred years the school gained a wide reputation for very strict discipline and thorough basic education, and boys travelled from every part of the district to attend it for many years after alternative schools became Available.

RANDOLPH CALDECOTT, ARTIST, LIVED HERE **by Myra Kendrick**

It was a young Caldecott who lodged in Bowdon in the early 1870s and perhaps a little earlier. Exactly where he lodged is at present unknown, as well as the exact dates. In 1872, at the age of twenty-six, as his career took a decisive turn from banking to illustration, first of periodicals and later of books, he left the north-west for London and did not return. But, a Cheshire-born man, he did not forget his origins.

Randolph Caldecott was born at Chester in 1846 and was a pupil at the King's School from the age of ten to fifteen, by which time he was head boy. Not particularly academic, as one of his brothers was, he started work as a bank clerk at Whitchurch, where he lodged on a farm and enjoyed country pursuits. In 1867 he transferred to the Manchester and Salford Bank in Mosley Street, Manchester (later Williams and Glynn's). It was while working there that he had rooms in Bowdon, probably for his later Manchester years.

From boyhood he had shown aptitude for drawing and a taste for country life. He loved animals, especially horses and dogs, and while in Shropshire had opportunities to study farm animals at close range. In Manchester he met artists, attended evening classes at the School of Art, sketched assiduously in his spare time (and sometimes in the bank's) and exhibited a painting at a Manchester exhibition.

He seems to have enjoyed rambling round the north Cheshire countryside for correspondence addressed to Manchester friends a few years after he left for London mentions Bowdon, Dunham, Bollington and Knutsford. So the inspiration for some of the highly expressive animals and birds (his pigs being specially amiable) of the picture books for which he became loved as his career advanced, could have come from nearby farms and fields. His jolly huntsmen are specially memorable, as well as the lively series of illustrations to "John Gilpin's Ride" and to well-known nursery rhymes such as "The House that Jack Built" and "A frog he would a-wooing go" with its hero dressed in elegant tails and carrying a bouquet.

Curiously, Caldecott has a link as an artist with another short-term Bowdon resident, Mrs J.H.Ewing, three of whose children's stories he illustrated and with whom he had an extensive correspondence. He designed a cover for "Aunt Judy's Magazine", for which she wrote and which she helped to edit, and contributes a cover design to a memoir of Mrs. Ewing written and published after her death by her sister Horatia Gatty.

Caldecott's illustrations to three of her stories, "Lob-Lie-by-the-Fire", "Jackanapes" and "Daddy Darwin's Dovecot", published in shilling volumes by S.P.C.K., show the charm, vigour and humour of his line drawings based on country life. The old gaffers who open and close the story of the foundling boy, Jack March, who was devoted to old Mr. Darwin's tumbler pigeons and eventually inherited his dovecote; the crowds running to greet Mr Darwin and Jack as they arrive in the village street to test the pigeons' homing capacity; the fat, happy pig enjoying being scrubbed down in the sty by his owner, Jack, all in the last-named book; and in "Jackanapes" the cloaked horseman galloping away down a country lane; the brainless grey goose on the village green and the duckling it fostered; the little boy Jackanapes himself riding wildly across the green blowing a toy trumpet: these and other illustrations are little gems of Caldecott's art.

We have no evidence of return to Bowdon by the artist, any more than of where he lodged for that brief period, but we have his own words to attest his affection for the place: "Having a great love and yearning for Bowdon and Dunham," he wrote to a friend in 1873, "and the 'publics' which there adjacent lie, I think of you on these calm Sunday evenings about the hour when my errant legs used to repose beneath the deal of the sequestered inn at Bollinton."

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