

Schools in Victorian Bowdon

by
MYRA KENDRICK



Best wishes for
Myra Kendrick,

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in
Victorian
Bowdon

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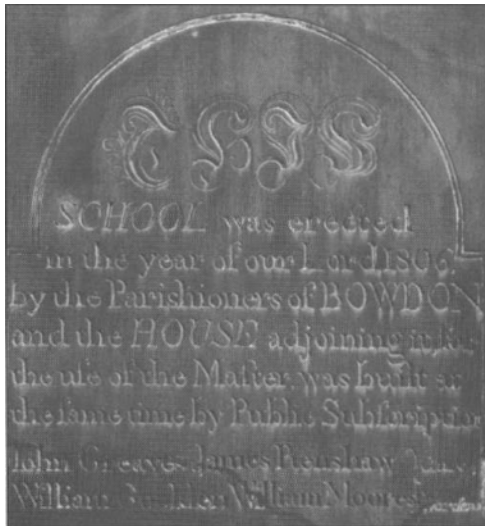
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SCHOOLS in VICTORIAN BOWDON

The development of schools in Bowdon during the second half of the nineteenth century was remarkable.

In the early eighteenth hundreds, Bowdon, within the boundaries we recognise today, apparently boasted only one school. This, the parish school associated with the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin, may have had a continuous existence from its foundation in the late sixteenth century, probably as a bequest by Edward Janny, a Manchester merchant who seems to have had local connections. Its history throughout

the nineteenth century can be traced in some detail from its rebuilding by local subscription in 1806; it offers an interesting reflection of contemporary trends in the development of primary education, as well as of facets of local life, and will be referred to later in greater detail. The parish school catered for the children of the poor farming community and was financed mainly by subscriptions from wealthier



Inscription from the wall of the old Bowdon Church School, now at the Grange Road site.

residents, the children paying only a few pence per week.

By 1821 evidence exists of a different type of school in Bowdon, a boarding academy obviously intended for sons of wealthier parents. Its principal was the Rev. John Jackson, strangely designated in a contemporary directory as the Vicar of Over. It is a likely assumption that he had a mere handful of boys living in his own house, the site of which is not known. Clergy at that period often supplemented their stipends by taking a few resident boy pupils into their homes.

In the 1830s two other schools were named in local directories. In 1834 John Neild, the parish clerk, was conducting a day school, and by 1836 a "ladies' boarding academy" was functioning with Mrs. S. Hankinson as principal.

By the late forties Bowdon was already recognised as a healthy environment for schooling in contrast to smoky, foggy Manchester. An advertisement appeared on the front page of the *Manchester Guardian* for 23rd and 30th January 1847, drawing attention to a school for girls just about to be opened by a lady who had recently given up her "finishing establishment of a superior order in London" because of "the air of the metropolis not agreeing with her". The lady, who remains anonymous, (she gives Mrs. A.L. Calvert's library in Upper Brook Street, Manchester, as the address to which enquirers should write for cards), intended to receive "a few young ladies at her residence in a salubrious locality (Bowdon) near Manchester". She claims that they "will be educated with maternal solicitude" and that "unceasing attention will be paid to the formation of character and lady-like deportment" as well as "the acquirement of such accomplishments as are necessary to form the domestic, polished gentlewoman". Among these accomplishments were evidently numbered music, dancing and drawing, for which "the best masters will attend", as well as the French and Italian languages, which the founder claims to speak fluently as a result of having been herself educated on the continent. She refers also to books she has written and articles she has contributed to "many of our leading periodicals". It is tantalising that we do not know this ardent educationalist's name, nor where exactly she established her school, which one assumes to have been a finishing school for older girls, as no mention is made in the advertisement of the elements of education: reading, writing and arithmetic.

This advertisement is an early hint of the attractiveness of Bowdon, on its hill raised above the level of the plains, as a healthy environment for the schooling of children whose homes were nearer smoky industrial towns. Next, the opening in 1849 of the Manchester to Altrincham and Bowdon railway line encouraged Manchester businessmen to move

out in increasing numbers to settle on the hill; this rapid expansion in the population caused an increased demand for local schools for their children.

On 9th January in the same year, 1847, Miss Holtham advertised in the *Manchester Guardian* her preparatory school for boys. Like the anonymous lady referred to above, she stressed its homelike atmosphere. "Miss Holtham receives under her care a limited number of Young Gentlemen, between the ages of 6 and 12, who, forming a family circle, individually receive her devoted attention, on a system uniting the advantages of a solid foundation for liberal scholastic acquirements, with the domestic comforts, the cheerful freedom, and the moral culture of home." She gave her address as Rose Hill, Bowdon. A school under her name survived several years, as in Slater's *Manchester and Salford Directory* for 1851, a Miss Holtham is listed as conducting a boarding and day school at Sunny Bank, Bowdon; but in Balshaw's *Stranger's Guide to Altrincham* of 1854, the entry changes to "Miss Holtham, Ladies' Seminary, Sunny Bank, Stamford Road". If this is the same Miss Holtham, one would like to know the reason for her switch of educational attention from little boys to girls.

Such schools, operating in houses capacious but not beyond family size, could not be large and might well be able to live up to such claims for a family atmosphere, given a principal of suitable personality.

Also appearing in Slater's *Directory* for 1851 is a reference to Mrs. Bernard Roark's "boarding and day, and music academy" at Brunswick Cottage, Ashley Road, Bowdon. This house survives today (1996) though its address is now Altrincham. The directory prints an extended advertisement for this "Seminary for Young Ladies" which hints that it was only recently established. The principal "begs to assure the Parents whose children may be entrusted to her charge that every attention will be paid to their educational improvement, moral conduct, and domestic comfort". She mentions that "the house is detached and surrounded by a pleasant garden; and the neighbourhood abounds with beautiful and healthy walks". The course of instruction is said to "comprise



Brunswick Cottage Ashley Road: Mrs Roark's School

the usual branches of a sound English Education, together with plain and fancy needlework, Music, French, Drawing and Dancing". This advertisement has the added interest of giving Mrs. Roark's terms in full, which are worth quoting:

Board and education, including Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Plain and Fancy Needlework (per annum)	£25.0s.0d
Weekly Boarders ditto, ditto.	£18.0s.0d
Day Pupils (per quarter)	£1.0s.0d

with the following extras per Quarter:

Music	£1.1 s.0d	Dancing, ditto.	3s.6d
French	£1.1 s.0d	Use of Piano-Forte	10s.0d
Drawing, by a Master	£1.11s.6d	Washing	
			£1.11s.6d

A postscript adds that private lessons on the pianoforte and in singing are given either at the Academy, or at the pupil's own residence.

Curiously, no other reference to this ambitious educational project has so far been discovered. But the advertisement gives valuable insight into the education of middle-class girls in the mid-nineteenth century. We have no comparable detailed evidence for the education of boys in Bowdon for more than a decade.

The Census Returns of 1851 provide evidence of the existence of several other schools, three of them on Stamford Road. In an unidentified house on the north side of the road, Marianne Spencer, 29 years old, with the help of her sister Ellen, aged 26, and two servants, had nine resident pupils, girls between the ages of 12 and 16. Balshaw's *Stranger's Guide* for 1854 names the Misses Spencer as living at Laurel Bank, which is on the south side of Stamford Road. We do not know the reason for the move. Four doors away from them (in 1851) Eleanora Zuivago or Quivago, a 24-year-old widow born at Dieppe, assisted by a 23-year old governess, also boarded nine pupils, two of whom were her 11- and 12-year old niece and nephew, Melient and Edward G. Holtham. The other boarders were six boys and one girl, sister to one of the boys, aged between six and nine years. This household also had two domestic servants and again the family size of the establishment is striking.

Meantime, on the south side of the road was living John Thompson, an unmarried 28-year-old schoolmaster, born in Boston, Lincolnshire. His household consisted of a house-keeper, a house-maid and a kitchen-maid and again nine resident pupils, most of them born in the Manchester area. This embryo school is of special interest in the history of education in Bowdon. The 1854 edition of *The Stranger's Guide* gives Mr. Thompson's address as Belfield House, which building continued to house boys' schools for the rest of the century, under a succession of head teachers. At the time of the 1861 Census Mr. Thompson had 21 resident pupils at Belfield House.

The Misses Jane and Sarah Ann Greaves' young ladies'



Late Victorian school children and their teacher, perhaps at Bowdon Church School.

school on Rose Hill was advertised in the *Manchester Guardian* for 3rd January 1857 as re-opening on Thursday, 20th January. From this we may safely assume that it was functioning at least as early as 1856, and it continues to be named in local directories for the next twenty-one years. By 1864 Bowdon's road system was taking shape, and the address is explicitly given as East Downs Road, though no number or house is mentioned. By this time only one Miss Greaves, Jane, seems to have been running the school.

By 1858 Mrs. Janet Hunt, a widow from Scotland, had a preparatory school for boys on Rose Hill. In 1861, at forty-six years old, she had eight boarders, but according to the 1871 Census Return, she later gave up the boarding side and concentrated on day pupils. Hers appears to have been a lasting venture, as in 1864 a Mrs. Edward Hunt had a seminary on Rose Hill, and a directory of 1878 names Mrs. G.E. Hunt as running a day school in East Downs Road (part of the former Rose Hill area). One assumes these names to refer to the same person. Independent evidence of the existence of this school is found in the records of the Gaddum family. Harry E. Gaddum was sent to Mrs. Hunt's day school in Bowdon early in 1871, staying for four years before going away to

boarding school. He was taught by a Miss Wallace, a name to become well-known in Bowdon some years later.

By 1858 two schools for boys had been established about which more information is available.

John Miller Dow Meiklejohn, M.A., from Edinburgh, founded Rose Hill School about 1857, after some experience of teaching in his father's school while studying for his degree, followed by a period of private tutoring. He was a gold medalist in Latin, had considerable acquaintance with German and had tutored in mathematics and science. The Census Return for 1861 shows that the headmaster of Rose Hill School at that date was thirty years old and unmarried. He had one assistant teacher, four household servants and eight boarders, four of them Manchester boys, one born as far afield as South America and another in the East Indies.

While at Bowdon Mr. Meiklejohn married and his first son was born there.

In 1864 an advertisement for Rose Hill School appeared in Morris & Co's *Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Cheshire*, which stated that the number of pupils was limited to ensure that there would be "a resident master for every twelve boys". It continued : "Great care is taken that every boy is well grounded in the elementary subjects - such as English Composition, Arithmetic, Writing and Reading." The Headmaster claims a high percentage of passes in both Senior and Junior divisions of the Oxford Local Examinations, with which the school had been connected since their institution, and he comments that his pupils had also "done remarkably well in the Civil Service Examinations". All the same, "the greatest amount of care and attention is given to the average and duller boys". Subjects of study listed include Greek, Latin, German, French, Mathematics, English Literature, History and Geography. Mr. Meiklejohn was proud of his equipment. "The best English and German maps - Historical and Geographical - and the best apparatus of every kind, are in the school."

Clearly this was a school with high academic aims and standards, where less able boys also found care and encouragement.

Its life was short, as Meiklejohn began to publish a series of textbooks and about 1867 moved to London where the chief publishing houses were. His subsequent career was distinguished. In 1870 he was appointed to the inspectorate of schools; in 1874 he became an Endowed Schools Commissioner and in 1876 Professor of Education at the



School-age Girl and her parents in a field near the schools of Rose Hill

University of St. Andrews. The list of his educational publications is formidable. It is of special interest, in view of his advertisement for Rose Hill School quoted above, that he was a pioneer of modern teaching methods, believing in encouraging children to find out for themselves rather than learn by rote.

The exact site of Meiklejohn's school is not known, though it seems to have been on the north side of East Downs Road, a little west of South Road. We know a little about his pupils. In letters to Dr. W.B. Hodgson, Professor of Education at Edinburgh University, John Mills of Bowdon wrote enthusiastically about this school to which he sent his sons, the daughters going (later presumably) to Miss Gregson's. Mr. Mills describes a presentation made to

Mr. Meiklejohn in September 1867 by his boys "old and young", apparently a parting gift of appreciation. Another boy known to have attended the school is one of the sons of the American hydrographer, Matthew Fontaine Maury, to whose elder sons Meiklejohn had been tutor in his younger days. The young Maury had to work long hours at Rose Hill, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. He seems to have been a thoroughly satisfactory pupil, who subsequently gained diplomas from the Royal Schools of Chemistry and of Mines.

On Meiklejohn's going to London in 1867, he handed over his school to Theophilus Dwight Hall, about whom more will be written later.

James Sudren named his school a "classical and mathematical academy" and a boarding school for young gentlemen. Advertising his new term in the *Manchester Guardian* for 3rd January 1857, he gives his address as Spring Bank, South Downs, Bowdon, though Kelly's *Directory* of 1864 gives it as Langham Road. His advertisement in Morris's *Directory* for 1864 is briefer than Mr. Meiklejohn's; he states that he personally conducts the school, "assisted by eminent professors", which would probably mean that he had a small graduate staff. What were his own qualifications is not stated. Neither do we know the age range of his or Mr. Meiklejohn's pupils, although the latter must have included some boys in their mid or late teens, considering his references to public examination successes.

Also in the 1860s John and Sarah Hampson were running a day school at South Downs Cottage, Lower Bowdon, now South Downs Road, on a plot he had leased for life from the then Earl of Stamford as early as 1843. When in 1863 he bought the plot, it was with the limiting clause that permission was given to use the premises as a school for a further fourteen years only, the earl of that date evidently being anxious to keep a check on the development of schools in the neighbourhood.

John Hampson had previously taught from 1810 to 1860 at Bury Street Academy, Manchester. His Bowdon school might be described as a retirement venture, as he could have



South Downs Cottage: John and Sarah Hampson.



Laurel Bank, Stamford Road.

been nearly seventy years old when he started it. Not surprisingly it does not seem to have lasted more than a few years. He died in 1878 at the age of eighty-eight and was buried in Bowdon Churchyard. The future Manchester cotton magnate, Sir Elkanah Armitage, was among his pupils.

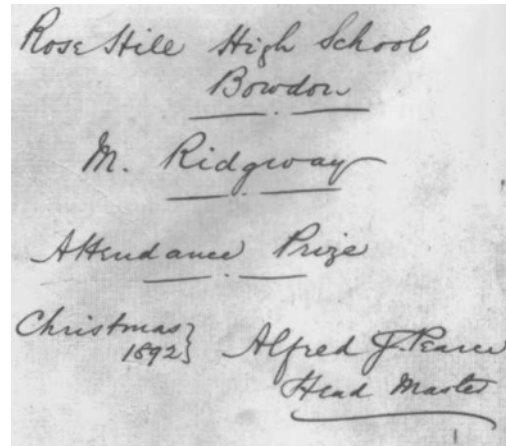
Miss Mary Kendrick had a ladies' boarding and day school at Laurel Bank, Stamford Road, in the 1860s, and, curiously, at the same date, Mrs. Chambers' ladies' seminary has the same address. They were presumably rival schools occupying neighbouring houses in the terrace. Another ladies' seminary had been established on Ashley Road by Mrs. E. M. Williamson and Miss Kate Dorrington. They named it Culcheth New Hall, as they themselves came from Culcheth, near Warrington. The building they occupied forms part of the present Culcheth Hall School, on the Cavendish Road side. The school was regarded as highly selective; the girls were grounded in manners and had to curtsy to their teachers.

During the 1870s, though the names of Miss Greaves and Mrs. Hunt are still to be found in contemporary lists of schools and their proprietors, a number of new names appear in the directories, some of them of great interest. By 1877 Belfield House had changed hands, and was now run as a preparatory school for boys under 15 years by two clergymen, probably non-conformist, Rev. Henry Surridge, M.A., and Rev. Alexander Watherstone, M.A. It was to "Surridge's School" that Harry Gaddum's younger brother Percy went in 1877 at the age of eight, before following his elders to preparatory boarding school and Rugby.

Mr. Meiklejohn's Rose Hill School had gone, but another of the same name was advertised in 1874 as being under the principalship of Mr. Alfred James Pearce, First B.A., London. We cannot be sure where Mr. Meiklejohn's school stood, though his playing fields are said to have lain between East Downs Road and West Road. Mr. Pearce, however, is known to have bought in 1874 for £1,000 the recently-built Methodist schoolroom when the old Chapel on Rose Hill was demolished to be replaced by the Dome Chapel on Enville Road. For some time before he had been renting the room for use during the week, the Methodists still using it on

Sundays and weeknights. This building, with the residential part of the school apparently built later by Mr. Pearce, still stands on South Road. His playing fields were on the land opposite the schoolroom, and he is said to have himself lived behind it on West Road in a house having access to the schoolroom and known as Daisy Bank, which may have been originally the caretaker's house for the former Methodist chapel and schoolroom.

Mr. A.J. Pearce came from the south of England to be headmaster of the British School in Oxford Road, Altrincham (since demolished). He was the author of a popular mathematics book and his reputation was such that he is said to have been invited by parents to found his school in Bowdon to fill a need felt by businessmen living locally, who did not want to send their young sons to boarding school if a sound and suitable education could be acquired near home.



A.J. Pearce's Rose Hill School, South Road, once the Methodist schoolroom.

Presumably Professor Hall's was not big enough to satisfy the growing demand. Among his pupils are named sons of such local families as Calderbank, Ormson, Ridgway and Syers. Canon M.H. Ridgway's father won an attendance prize there at Christmas 1892. Mr. Pearce's own son was a pupil in his father's school until the age of 14, when he was sent to complete his education in Germany. Similarly, sons of German customers of Manchester businessmen came to learn English and to be educated at Rose Hill School. In the 1890s, two Rose Hill pupils are known to have gone on to Manchester Grammar School.

A Cheshire directory of 1874 contains an advertisement for Mr. Pearce's school. It gives the course of instruction as including English "in all its branches", Mathematics, French, German, Latin, Physical Science, Drawing and Drill. The inclusion of Physical Science is interesting; it was not in the curriculum of the earlier Rose Hill School. The Principal was said to be "assisted by French and German Masters, and well qualified teachers". He made an explicit point of having a large schoolroom and playground detached from the residence.



*Daisy Bank,
West Road.*

A.J. Pearce, known to his pupils as "Daddy Pearce", was reputed to be a strict disciplinarian. He catered for boarders as well as for day pupils, and his daughters, in turn, helped him on the domestic side, the youngest, Miss Jessie, continuing to keep house for his successor, who took over about 1905 when Mr. Pearce retired. But the school survived his retirement by one year only. His grave is in Bowdon Churchyard; the inscription gives his life span as from 1837 to 1908. He was himself, however, an active member of the Downs Congregational Chapel. Non-conformists were indeed responsible for the founding of a number of Bowdon's private schools.

Probably during the 1880s A.J. Pearce's eldest child, Caroline, after helping her father at Rose Hill School, started a school for girls on the Higher Downs, opposite the Congregational Church. Caroline Pearce was an expert linguist, specialising in French and German. She was an energetic young woman, a cyclist as well as a hockey player and before long moved to Cromer where she ran a boarding school for girls.

Another interesting foundation of the early 1870s was Mr. George Schelling's Boarding and Day School at Laurel Bank, Stamford Road. This terrace was still in demand for schools, as during the previous decade. In an extant advertisement, it is claimed that this school "obviates the necessity of Parents sending their children abroad". The main course of instruction was said to be "arranged in strict conformity with the plan of a German *Real Schule*, thereby meeting the special requirements of Young Gentlemen intended for Commercial and Scientific pursuits". Here is reflected the high esteem in which German educational ideas and practice were held in Victorian England.

Thus, too, the close business connections between Germany and Manchester at this period are emphasised. But Mr. Schelling also offered "the more careful study of classics, to such boys as are likely to select a Professional Career in after life". Special emphasis was laid on the study of modern languages in what Mr. Schelling describes as "the usual branches of a sound English and Scientific Education: as well

as Latin, Greek and Mathematics, German and French occupy a prominent position, both languages forming, so far as practicable, the conversational medium in the house". A special feature was an optional seven-weeks' continental tour led by the Principal in the summer vacation.

The school also had a preparatory department, under a lady, "for very young boys".

Mr. Schelling describes himself as "a German of fourteen years' experience as a Teacher in England, France and Germany", and claims that he chooses his resident assistant and visiting masters "with the greatest possible care". He cared as well for his pupils' health, advertising his domestic arrangements as being "of a thoroughly satisfactory character", while the "House and Playground are situated on the sand at a considerable elevation above the surrounding country".

It is clear that at this period Bowdon was attracting from elsewhere men of initiative and high educational ideals to teach the sons of the new residents and prepare them to follow in their fathers' footsteps, and that the healthy climate attracted boarders from farther afield.

Also during the 1870s an enterprising lady established a school for girls at Highbury House, West Road. Miss Frances Anne Gregson acquired the land for building in 1873. She may have started her school earlier in another house, but Highbury was actually built for a school.

Highbury College was not Miss Gregson's first venture in education. In the 1860s at the age of eighteen, her father having apparently failed in business, she came from Ardwick to Altrincham in an attempt to retrieve the family fortunes. With £400 borrowed from an uncle who was head of the Dublin firm of Guinness, she bought a house in Norman's Place and started a kindergarten school. This was successful enough for her to be able to repay the loan in entirety in two years.

The Ladies' College at Highbury House was for older girls up to about eighteen years and was mainly a day school, with a few boarders. It seems to have catered for little boys as well. The evidence for this again comes from the Gaddum family records; a seven-year-old boy of the family was a pupil there in 1879. For this work Miss Gregson had nei-

ther training nor qualifications, though obviously she had high intelligence and organising ability. She is said to have claimed, with other educationalists, that you could teach anything so long as you were one lesson ahead of your pupils. This theory lay behind the monitorial system used in the British and National schools of the century. Yet the curriculum she planned was quite academic; she had the help of a



Highbury College. Miss Gregson.

number of visiting specialists for such subjects as French and German, and perhaps mathematics and science. Several of her sisters helped, too. Hannah Gregson ran the house and took care of the linen; her gifts were sewing and cooking. Dora also probably helped, before marrying an Edinburgh professor.

The supreme asset to the school was Gertrude, academically brilliant, with a great reputation as a teacher. She was the first woman to attain degree standard at London University, in about 1887, at which date the University did not grant degrees to women. She had read English at London, but also had mathematical gifts, and at the age of forty was accepted at Manchester University for a degree course in Chemistry.

The girls had physical training with a man instructor, were taught deportment and dancing, and played tennis and ping-pong. The playing fields were extensive; the broad stone marking-lines for the tennis courts can still be seen in the grounds of Bowdon Preparatory School. The school's motto was "Semper ad Lucem".

This highly successful venture survived into the twentieth century. The Misses Gregson closed it sometime before 1914, but lived on in the house until the end of the First World War, and it was not used again for a school until the Misses McCrirrick acquired it during the 1920s for their preparatory school. Highbury House is currently occupied by Altrincham Preparatory School for Boys.

A contemporary of Flighbury College in the 1870s was the Misses A. & M. Dorrington's Ladies' Boarding School at Hillside, Langham Road. In 1878 the principal was named as Miss Martha Dorrington. This lasted until about 1893/4, and catered for day pupils as well as termly boarders. The daughter of a former pupil has described how her mother was transferred to the school about 1884 at the age of twelve or thirteen because the air of Harrogate, where she had attended school previously, was too cold for her.



*Hillside, Langham Road:
The Missess Dorrington.*

She stayed at Hillside until she was about seventeen years old.

The size of the house suggests that, like other Bowdon schools established in buildings intended for private dwellings, the number of boarders must have been fairly small. The curriculum was probably not particularly academic: it was a finishing school, and stress would be laid on accomplishments, such as music and painting, with possibly French, rather than on learning. On Sundays the boarders were walked in the morning to Bowdon Parish Church, giving the girls an opportunity to meet the boys of Bowdon College, and in the evening to St. John's.

According to the 1871 Census, Theophilus Dwight Hall was at that date conducting a school for boys on Rose Hill, with 47 pupils and three assistant masters. As previously mentioned, he had succeeded, in 1867, J.M.D. Meiklejohn as principal of the original Rose Hill School. He came to Bowdon from the south of England, having been born at Henfield in Sussex, the son of the Rev. G.J. Hall, Congregational Minister there. He was a graduate of London University with a Master's degree and a gold medal in classics. At the time of the Census, he was 47 years old, and married. T.D. Hall's previous schoolmastering appointments had been at Cleaver House, Windsor, and Mill Hill School. Then in 1857 he came to Lancashire Independent College to a chair of classics, also teaching literature and some biblical studies, gaining a reputation for scholarly teaching, care and efficiency.

His scholarship and soundness as a teacher undoubtedly attracted to his school, which was to become Bowdon College, many pupils especially from Congregationalist families. He himself, like his predecessor Meiklejohn, was a member of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church. One such distinguished pupil was George Arnold Wood, from a family of Manchester cotton spinners, who later graduated at Owen's College, Manchester, and became a history lecturer at the University of Sydney in Australia.

By 1874 Hall had transferred his "boarding and day school for young gentlemen" to South Downs Road, to a site described by Alfred Ingham in his *Cheshire: Its Traditions*

and History (1920) as near the former Bowdon Moss. In 1870 he had already acquired the land for the purpose from the Earl of Stamford, and further land was added five years later, presumably as the numbers of pupils had increased.

The first building to be erected on the site was that until recently used as flats. Here Professor Hall conducted his



Bowdon College, South Downs Road: T.D. Hall and W.M. Smith.

school until 1892, when he was succeeded as headmaster by William Matthew Smith, B.A., a graduate of London University, who in time built the extension now used by Altrincham Preparatory School for Boys, Junior Department. Professor Hall's original building was then, for some years, used as the headmaster's house, and to accommodate boarders. A link with the old school was maintained by a daughter of T.D. Hall, reputed to have taught under W.M. Smith.

Professor Hall became influential in his new district as well as in Manchester, being a long-term Manager of the British Schools in Oxford Road, Altrincham; a member of the Manchester Board of Schoolmasters, and a Founder of the

Bowdon Literary and Scientific Club, of which he was the Secretary. It was he who organised courses of scientific lectures by men of note. Again, Hall organised the Bowdon Committee for Relief of Armenian orphans after the massacres of 1895-7 and finally was chosen to select the necessary books for the Altrincham Reference Library which he was responsible for founding. Like Meiklejohn, he was a writer of educational books, and a collaborator with Smith (not the future headmaster) on his famous series of Latin dictionaries.

Professor Hall's successor, William Matthew Smith, came to Bowdon from Kent, where he had been headmaster and co-owner of Thanet College. His reign at Bowdon College was long, most of it outside the Victorian era. He did not retire from the headship until 1925, and even then continued to teach under the headship of his son, George F. Smith. This was yet another family enterprise. His two daughters, Barnie and Joan, helped with the teaching, and in time his wife ran a preparatory department, of which Mr. Alec Okell was the first pupil. The school was locally highly reputed; Alfred Ingham wrote of "the splendid college near Langham Road" and W.M. Smith is still remembered among former pupils for the emphasis he laid on good manners, discipline and care for dress, as well as scholarship. His pupils affectionately nicknamed him "Pike". His special interests in school were English, with a delight in Dickens' novels, and religious studies; he chose for the college the motto "Nisi Deus Sine Deo Nihil".

W.M. Smith was an educationalist in a wider sense. To bring the college into line with modern educational practice he added a gymnasium and physics and chemistry laboratories, and enlarged the workshop. He worked with leading local men, such as Judge Bradbury, Mr. W. Armitage and the Rev. Dendy Agate, for the extension of secondary education in Altrincham, which led to the founding, early in the twentieth century, of the county high schools for boys and girls.

At Bowdon Church where he worshipped he became a lay reader and he was a long-serving manager of the church school. He became Chairman of the local Conservative Association and was keenly interested in Bowdon Cricket and Hockey Clubs.

Bowdon College did not close until 1936 by which time competition from grant-maintained schools was causing difficulties for the privately owned. The only other private school to exceed it in length of life is Culcheth Hall, which is still flourishing at the time of writing.

The name of this school was adapted from its predecessor's, Culcheth New Hall, the ladies' seminary of which Mrs. Williamson and Miss K. Dorrington were the principals. But it seems from the first to have been of a rather different stamp. The intellectual power behind it when it was founded



Culcheth Hall School: The Misses Lang

in 1891 with thirteen pupils was Miss Edith Lang, who was co-principal with her sisters Helen and Mary.

They bought first the south side of the present building, adding the north side in 1903, for by then the number of pupils had risen to one hundred, including termly boarders.

After the death of her sister Helen in 1898, Miss Edith was responsible for the girls' education, while Miss Mary acted as bursar and took charge of the domestic arrangements. Miss Edith herself had been educated at Manchester

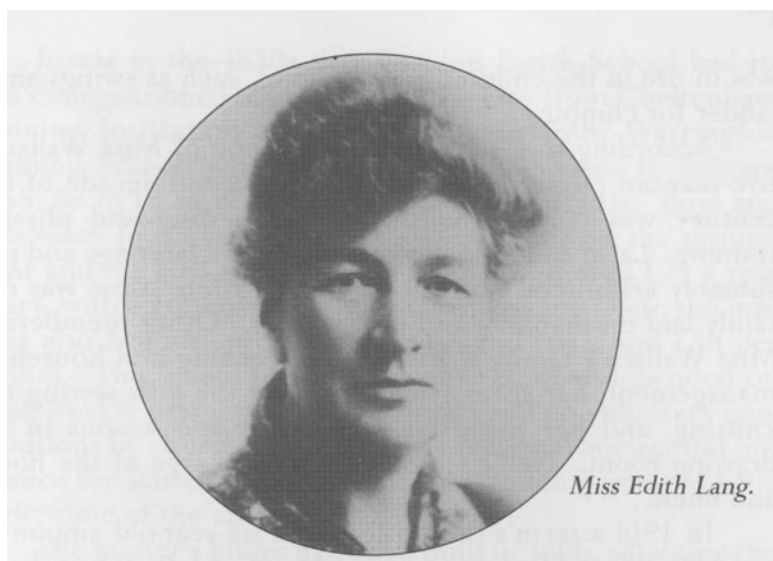


Culcheth Hall pupils in the 1890s

High School, and was one of the first four women to be admitted as students at Manchester University. Here is an interesting parallel with the career of Miss Gertrude Gregson at Highbury College; Miss Lang, however, was permitted to take a degree (B.A. Hons. History) in 1887, at which date London University, where Miss Gregson was a student, still denied degrees to women.

Culcheth Hall School developed steadily under the Lang family, adding new buildings and increasing its facilities. Miss Edith kept her interest in this family enterprise after her retirement from the headship in 1920, when a limited company was formed under her chairmanship, and Miss A.C. Hackforth was appointed headmistress. Miss Mary lived until 1920 and Miss Edith until 1942. Both had an impact on Bowdon life, Miss Mary Lang being a founder member of the Bowdon Sixty Club.

Meantime Belfield or Bellfield House (both spellings are recorded) had had a further change of ownership. In Kelly's *Directory* of 1896 it is not mentioned, so presumably the Revs. H.A.D. Surridge and Alexander L. Watherston had retired, but Slater's *Directory* of 1902 names Miss J.D.



Miss Edith Lang.

Wallace as principal of a day and boarding preparatory school for boys at Belfield House, West Road. This seems likely to be the Miss Wallace who had been an assistant at Mrs. Hunt's preparatory school in East Downs Road. It is not clear exactly when she started her own school, but it certainly continued during the first two decades of the twentieth century, earning a considerable local reputation. John Ireland, the composer, was one of her pupils; another was Ronald Gow, dramatist and some time English Master at Altrincham High School (later Grammar School) for Boys, where he pioneered film-making with his pupils. Girls of the Gaddum family started their education at Miss Wallace's, going on later to Culcheth Hall, then away from Bowdon to boarding school.

By 1905 Miss Wallace had left Belfield House and moved to a smaller house on Stamford Road now known as Langham Lea. Here she admitted girls as well as boys. She was a disciplinarian and her methods were rather old-fashioned, though thorough. She is said to have given her lessons with her pupils standing in a row in front of her; if a child gave a wrong answer he or she was sent to the bottom of the class. One is reminded of Charlotte Bronte's description of lessons at Lowood School half a century earlier. Boys and girls had some lessons together, including drill conducted by Colonel Poulton in a large basement room. Some modern equipment

was in use in the children's playground, such as swings and a ladder for climbing.

According to a school report on one of Miss Wallace's five-year-old pupils, a little girl in the second decade of this century was taught English, writing, sewing and physical training. Latin and French were taught at a later age and presumably arithmetic was not neglected, while stress was certainly laid on manners and deportment. Other members of Miss Wallace's family shared in the teaching and household management, her sister Helen teaching the girls sewing and knitting, and her niece Nellie giving piano lessons in the drawing room. Nellie's mother was in charge of the house and linen.

In 1914 a term's tuition fee for a six-year-old amounted to £3. 3s. 0d. and for stationery and books £1. 0s. 0d. each was charged.

Miss Wallace's school was such a local institution that, on her retirement to Trearddur Bay about 1920, in the words of one old pupil, "it did not seem possible that any child could ever be properly educated in Bowdon".

Meantime, throughout the nineteenth century the Church School continued to play its part, and in its development reflected national trends in elementary education. In May 1817 it was affiliated to the voluntary body founded in 1811 and known as the National Society for Promoting Religious Education in accordance with the Principles of the Church of England, after which the parish school became known as the National School. This implied, among other conditions, that (to quote from the terms of union with the National Society) the pupils were to be "instructed in the Holy Scriptures and in the Liturgy and Catechism of the Established Church", the masters and mistresses were to be members of the Church of England and the school was under the supervision of the parochial clergymen. This was part of the Anglican response to the contemporary founding, by dissenting bodies, of the British Schools. Apparently re-organisation in both curriculum and teaching methods was involved, and the stimulus to elementary education the two societies gave led to a demand for better qualified teachers and the establishment of teacher training colleges.

It was in the 1850s that Bowdon Parish School had its first college-trained teachers, Mr. I.H. Dee from Cheltenham Training Institution and Miss Singleton from Warrington Training School, who both took up their posts in January 1855, he to be in charge of boys and she of girls. Boys and girls were to be taught separately, the boys on the ground floor and the girls above. The master was offered £75 a year salary, with an unfurnished house, gardens and coals; the mistress also had an unfurnished house and coals and £50 per annum. The school's finances appear to have depended on small weekly payments by the scholars and on voluntary contributions by church members. The National Society did not finance the school, although it made a building grant of £100 at the time of the affiliation.

The master's house had been built in 1806, adjoining the newly-built school. Where the mistress's house was is not clear, though it may have been on the opposite side to the school on what is now known as Richmond Road. In about 1855 an infants' school was started with 55 children, said to have been held in a small room inadequate for the number of children, possibly in the master's house. Mrs. Phoebe Lumsden, an uncertificated teacher, was in charge. The children moved up to the main school at the age of six-and-a-half.

This decade also saw the beginning of state aid for the Parish School. In 1854 at the School Managers' request, H.M. Inspector the Rev. H.R.P. Sandford paid a visit and reported on the building. He found the boys' department rather low in the roof. In 1858 the government Committee of Council for Education made a grant of £162 for "building, enlargement, fixtures or improvements" to Bowdon School, and plans for an entirely new infants' school with a small detached teacher's house, are extant dated 1858. Certainly an infants' school was completed in February 1858 and a new infants' class was started at once, each child paying 6d. a week. Plans were under discussion to replace the main school building as well, but it was difficult to raise funds and there was long delay. It seems that eventually, probably in the seventies, the old building was extended rather than being replaced. In fact, these extended buildings were in use until

their demolition in 1969, when the school was moved to new premises in Grange Road. The infants' school, however, was replaced in 1908/9 by a new building in the Vale. Miss E.H. Spencer was then in charge of the infants.

It was on the appointment of Mr. Hugh Evason and his wife to begin duties in January 1863 that the separate teaching



Bowdon from the church tower, showing the old church school, which was demolished in 1969.

of boys and girls ended and mixed classes began. This was an economy move, not educational in origin. Apparently the master's wife, not being in charge of a separate girls' department, would receive a lower salary. The partnership of the Evasons with the National School and Mrs. Lumsden with the Infants' lasted long and seems to have been highly successful. Mrs. Lumsden retired in 1878. In both departments of the school, teen-age pupil teachers assisted in the work, while themselves receiving regular instruction from the master. These young apprentice teachers were regularly examined, and were destined for Training College courses. Records also mention small payments to monitors, so the system of setting selected pupils to help in teaching their juniors, adopted in both British and National Schools from their foundation,

persisted in Bowdon at least until the end of the century, alongside the pupil teacher system.

From 1870, on the passing of the famous Education Act by which it became the duty of the State to see that there was sufficient accommodation to provide elementary education for all children, the Parish School began a new phase in its development, receiving certain state aid in exchange for modification of the timetable so that, by a "conscience clause", it became possible for dissenting parents to withdraw their children from periods of church teaching without impairing their general education. Religious instruction had to be confined to the beginning and end of the school day.

Records show the continuing interest of several Bowdon families in the welfare of the Parish School. Local gentlemen served on the committee of management, and many church families subscribed to the building maintenance funds. The Carlisle family of High Lawn took a special interest in the infants' school, visiting the children at work and inviting them every summer to a treat in High Lawn garden.

Similarly we read of the concerts given by school children which needed special time to prepare, and were doubtless attended by the school's patrons.

It was not until 1910 that the first state-controlled secondary school was opened in Bowdon. This was known as the Altrincham County High School for Girls, opened under the headship of Miss M. Howes Smith, M.A., in a new building erected in the grounds of the former Bowdon Lodge in Cavendish Road. The County High School for Boys followed, in Marlborough Road, in 1912, under the headship of Mr. L. Saville Laver, M.A. (Cantab). Both these schools were later re-named Grammar Schools.

So Victorian Bowdon saw the beginning of state responsibility for education at the elementary (later, primary) stage, to be followed before the crisis of the First World War by the founding of state-maintained secondary schools. Independent education in Bowdon at both levels was thus supplemented and extended by the county system, but not superseded, and this is as true today as it was in the reign of Victoria's successor.

OTHER SCHOOLS NAMED IN CONTEMPORARY DIRECTORIES

- 1854 Mrs Inman, day school, Laurel Bank, Stamford Road.
Miss Wolstenholme, ladies' seminary, Rose Hill.
Mrs. Lambeth, ladies' seminary, the Vale.
- 1858 Miss Ellen Watson, boarding school for girls,
Sunnyside, Stamford Road.
Mrs. Brooks and Miss Atkinson, ladies' day and
boarding school, the Vale.
- 1860 The Rev. William Forster, boarding school for young
gentlemen, Stamford Road. Address given in 1864
as Vivian House, Rose Hill.
Ellen Atkinson, Bowdon Vale.
- 1871 Miss Ethel Hollingworth, Laurel Bank, (seminary).
Mrs. Henry C. Oats, Prospect House.
- 1878 Mrs. Elizabeth Oats, girls' boarding and day school,
Vale Road.
Mrs. Mary Sharp, ladies' boarding school, Albert
Square.
S. Sturmer, boys' day school, Grange Road.
- 1896 Misses Lucie Crochete and Constance Thomson,
ladies' day and boarding school, East Downs Road.
Harrison and Logan, also Miss Mary Logan, ladies'
school, Thornfield, East Downs Road.
- 1898 Miss Marie Loder, Hillside, Langham Road.
- 1902 Miss Mary Harrison, Thornfield, East Downs Road.
Miss Spencer, Kelstonleigh, Delamer Road.

In an article printed in *The Manchester Review* for spring and summer, 1965, N.J. Frangopulo refers to an Anglo-German high school for girls in Victorian Bowdon, but this so far has not been identified.

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sources consulted include:

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