

MANSIONS AND MEN OF DUNHAM MASSEY

From Errant Earl to Red Dean



FRANK BAMFORD

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INTRODUCTION

In my book *'Trade for the People'* I commented on the many mansions built in the Altrincham and Bowdon area by the cotton barons who by virtue of the great industrial revolution in south Lancashire had accumulated considerable wealth by the middle of the 19th century. Living, as I do, so close to many of these great houses, I have long wanted to learn more about their origins and the people who built them. So I decided that it would be interesting to move from the broad sweep of *'Trade for the People'* to a much more detailed and local study of the economic and social history of the Altrincham area since about 1850 when so many vital changes were taking place that they constituted a veritable climacteric for the town. It seemed to me that such a study would not only show the impact of the events in Lancashire on north Cheshire but could also throw some light on those events themselves and on the people involved in them.

In terms of the development of the Altrincham area it soon became clear to me that the first major change was in fact the building of the mansions in the township of Dunham Massey which had so fascinated me in the first place. It is true that the town of Altrincham was steadily developing after 1850 in other directions but there was nothing as immediately spectacular as the creation of a wealthy suburb in the south-west. Within 30 years this development spread from around the Higher Downs to well beyond the Chester road with substantial ramifications partly on the eastern side back towards the town but particularly on the west into both the Devisdale area and even further into the fringes of Dunham New Park. I soon learnt, to my surprise, that this was essentially the southern part of the ancient township of Dunham Massey.

Surprise turned to astonishment when I came to understand that in 1850 hardly anyone lived in this wide area. Yet in that very year the Earl of Stamford, who owned most of the land, was developing a plan to build a great new church for the parish of Dunham Massey in this open space with only a handful of houses in a third of a mile radius. Furthermore, at that time the parish did not even exist. Very soon I concluded that this was a story waiting to be told, an historical mystery waiting to unravelled. It was an essential first instalment of the book I had been envisaging to cover a wider area, a longer period and many other classes of people but I felt that it could not wait upon that more leisurely process.

So, as astonishment turned into excitement, I have spent a large part of several months in the summer of 1990 researching and writing what is surely a quite unique story. In this book I have endeavoured to set the story into its historical context and to throw some light on the mystery of the Earl's decision to build the new church which he called St. Margaret's after his sister. The book traces over some three decades the progressive creation of a uniquely wealthy suburb and parish around the church which was planned and controlled by the Earl. It dem-

onstrates that the men who came to the township of Dunham Massey were mainly from the ranks of the thousands of millionaires (in 1990 terms) among the cotton masters and their associated industries and professions. For reasons which I will explain, they came from Manchester rather than south Lancashire.

It has been possible to establish the identity of the new arrivals, the composition of their households, their businesses and professions and their religious affiliations. It has also seemed appropriate to consider the cultural achievements, including particularly the domestic architecture, of the new community. Finally, it has been impossible to avoid discussion of the social morality of the wealthy people of this religious age in this especially privileged locality, dependent upon gross inequality, yet somewhat detached from the worst of its physical manifestations, even in Altrincham.

I have given special attention to both the achievements and the social views of a number of the most eminent Men of Dunham Massey, some of whom were apparently among the most religious of the adherents of either the Anglican or Congregational churches. In conclusion, it has seemed appropriate to venture into the early 20th century to throw further light back on the extraordinary Victorian period. The arrival of Hewlett Johnson as Curate and then Vicar of St. Margaret's betokened a new gleam of social morality in the thinking of the Anglican Church which focussed attention on the plight of the people who fared so differently from the owners of the Mansions of Dunham Massey. The building of a large council house estate nearby, even as the Mansions began to be no longer viable, demonstrated that the new light had spread somewhat more widely in the new century.

I could not have composed this account of the astonishing Victorian era in Dunham Massey, at least in nearly so short a period, without the willing help of many people, in particular members of the Bowdon and Altrincham History Societies. Mrs Marjorie Cox, Chairman of the Bowdon History Society, has not only assisted greatly by pointing me in the right direction for sources and introduced me to other helpful people, but has also commented constructively on earlier drafts. Dr Don Bayliss, Chairman of the Altrincham History Society, has also been most helpful on sources and people as well as with critical comments. Peter Kemp of Bowdon has very constructively supplemented his own book on the Higher Downs. Valerie and Ronald Trenbath, also of Bowdon, have been most pleasantly encouraging with local information and sources as well as with comments on architecture invaluable to an ignorant amateur. The Vicar of St. Margaret's, the Rev. J. Arthur Roberts, has been most kind and helpful, not least in introducing me to his churchwarden Mr Kenneth Lewis who has been amusingly informative. It was also very kind of Dr and Mrs Gillett to show their house 'Fernroyd' to my wife and myself.

I have come quickly to appreciate the invaluable research services provided by our wonderful public libraries, including the Local History Department of Man-

chester's Central Library (which provided the portraits of some of the Men of Dunham Massey and drawings from *The British Architect*) as well as the Altrincham and Sale Libraries and the Cheshire Record Office at Chester, to the staff of all of which I am very grateful.

I must make special mention of the John Rylands Library on Deansgate, Manchester, which, as part of Manchester University, is now custodian of many of the Stamford Estate papers. These must constitute a veritable mine of information yet to be explored. Cataloguing is being undertaken by Mr John Hodgson who has, I believe, a long task ahead of him. Only a modest proportion of the papers can at present be studied, but Mr Hodgson has made available to me a substantial collection of draft conveyances of land from the Earl of Stamford. He has also been very helpful in commenting critically on my final draft. The draft conveyances do have some limitations but I have been able to check a few doubtful points by brief reference to the final official conveyances held in the Stamford Estates office in Altrincham.

One of the most difficult problems to be resolved in a history of this kind is the translation of money values from one century to another. Every economic statistician is aware of the limitations of a general index of prices even over a few decades as the pattern of consumption expenditure changes markedly, mainly because of technical and economic progress. This fact of life necessitates periodic changes to the 'basket' of goods on which the index is based. Over a period of 140 years many such changes are inevitable and the validity of the index in comparing the beginning and the end of such a period is very questionable. However, the very fact that the period is so long and values so changed makes it important to attempt some general statement about the relative value of money between 1850 and 1880 compared with the situation in 1990. Without such a statement, vital aspects of social history are difficult to grasp.

Another complication is that during the second half of the 19th century the general price level fluctuated considerably – in those far-off days prices actually went down as well as up over long periods! However, as a broad guide, it can reasonably be stated that the value of money – of the pound sterling – has fallen about 30 to 40 times between then and now.

The limitations of such a statement are, however, quite severe. Specifically, the price of labour has changed to a dramatically more marked extent. In the third quarter of the last century, the typical wage of an adult male, even in the comparatively well paid cotton textile industry of Lancashire, was well below £1 a week, probably more like 60 to 70 pence. Only the much lower pay of the wife and children of the family brought the household income above the £1 a week level.

Today of course the average wage is over £200 a week. Two conclusions may be drawn from this vast increase. First, the obvious one that even allowing for the increase in prices, there has been an enormous increase in real wages and the

standard of living, nearly all of it after 1880, as explained in *'Trade for the People'*. Secondly, and less obviously, labour was so cheap over a hundred years ago that a wealthy minority of people – the cotton masters in particular – could command the work of very large numbers of working-class men, women and children. Most relevant to this historical story, large numbers of people could be employed very inexpensively on building churches and houses. So in evaluating the cost of such edifices in 1990 terms, one realistically has to multiply the declared amounts by considerably more than 30 to 40. Perhaps a multiple of around 100 is more meaningful.

Frank Bamford
October 1990

ALTRINCHAM IN THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY

The middle of the 19th century constituted a real historical watershed for the old market town of Altrincham. For five and a half centuries since the granting of its charter in 1290, little seems to have disturbed the even tenor of its ways, or little at any rate that has been effectively recorded for posterity. By the year 1800 less than 1,700 people lived within its few acres, not many more than the total of the village of Bowdon (340) and the sprawling township of Dunham Massey (872). The construction of the Bridgewater Canal in the 1760s, the notable beginning of the canal age in Britain, had brought some stimulus to the trade of Altrincham and a probable doubling of its small population by 1801. Early in the 19th century the town even boasted three textile factories employing in total over 100 people, but industry was never strongly established until late in the century.

The 19th century, however, witnessed developments of a quite different order. A major increase in industrial activity and trade in Britain was accompanied by a striking general increase in population, generally considered to be associated with a reduction in child mortality and as a result of better medical knowledge and water supplies even though the room for improvement in these was still enormous. Nowhere in the country was the upsurge in industry and trade more marked than in south Lancashire, including Manchester, where it really all began. The developments in this area are discussed more fully in a separate chapter.

The increase in business and trade in its neighbouring county undoubtedly had some impact on activity in Altrincham in respect of the provision of supplies and services. This impact, together with the rising tide of population in general, resulted in a doubling of the town's inhabitants after 1800 to nearly 3,400 in 1841 and rising further to almost 4,500 in 1851.

At this time the town was contained in a quite limited area from the north west around the Old Market Place and a short distance along the Manchester Road (around the Wheatsheaf Inn) to the south east in the area now occupied by Sainsbury's food store. Neither Stamford New Road nor Barrington Road existed nor any housing to the north-east of the latter area. Railway Street swerved in a kind of 'S' bend to join up with George Street near the beginning of the present Regent Road, with only a few houses to the east. In the west there were a few houses along Dunham Road from the Old Market Place, but very few between the area of Shaw's Road and Regent Road. The latter was then known as Chapel Walk and only built upon for part of its current length. The first part of New

Street was heavily populated as was the area between that street and Railway Street.

The Bowdon Downs area had for long been recognised as an attractive recreational area and, as the pressure of population developed, it proved an irresistible attraction for the middle class. In the 1830s and early 1840s the right-hand side (as one leaves Altrincham) of the street now known as The Downs was progressively filled with substantial houses, although little was built on the other side for some years to come.

The name Railway Street was particularly significant in that it denoted a recognition of the arrival of the railway to Manchester, opened in 1849 with a station for Altrincham near the level crossing (now only for pedestrians) with a later extension to Bowdon station near the beginning of Lloyd Street and sited at the back of the shops on Railway Street. Altrincham was rather late in getting its railway almost 20 years into the great age of the train. By 1860 the national network, if that is the right word for the mainly uncoordinated patchwork of competing and duplicated lines, was substantially complete. The main line from Manchester to London, finished in 1842, had taken a route through Stockport and Wilmslow, leaving Altrincham very much to one side. Relevant to our history is the fact that the station at Alderley Edge was opened soon afterwards, a fact to which we will return.

Another notable mid-century development was the replacement of oil street lamps with gaslighting which took place over a period of several years, beginning in 1846. A new gas works was built in 1847 on Hale Moss by the Altrincham Gas Company. In the same period the first rudimentary hospital of the town, a wooden structure on Hale Moss which was in operation in the 1840s, was replaced in the early 1850s by Lloyd's Hospital in Lloyd Street for people with contagious or infectious fevers.

Moving from the body to the spirit, 1848 was very significant in respect of the replacement of a small chapel at the foot of The Downs by the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church which was to feature strongly in the life of the area for the rest of the century.

In view of all these enlightened developments, it comes as something of a shock to learn that at this time Altrincham lacked both a proper water supply and even a basic sewage disposal system. Water supply rested mainly on two wells, one somewhere between George Street and Springfield Road and the other on Hale Moss. The quality of the water undoubtedly left a good deal to be desired, especially because of the sewage running through the streets, and dysentery and typhoid were rife. The need for a fever hospital was very evident and a death rate of nearly 30 per thousand hardly surprising. The detailed means by which these dire conditions were remedied in the 1850s need not concern us except to note that the initial arrangement for depositing sewage in Timperley Brook was not discontinued until 1869. The existence of these conditions, horri-



Bowdon Downs Congregational Church

fying to the cosseted people of the late 20th century, must have been an added inducement, if any were needed, for the middle class to flee to Bowdon and Dunham Massey.

The foregoing summary of the Altrincham scene in the middle of the 19th century is the context in which the population of the town raced ahead from around 4,500 in 1851 to nearly 12,500 in 1891, while Bowdon went from 1,164 to 2,792 and Dunham Massey from 1,255 to 2,079, with Hale and Timperley increasing similarly. Clearly there were two main forces driving this expansion – the industrial and commercial development of south Lancashire, including Manchester, and the transport potential, especially for commuting, afforded by the railway.

Before we proceed to consider the former of these in more detail, it needs to be emphasised that the principal scope for comfortable housing lay in the area to the south west, up on the Downs where there was plenty of attractive space from which access to Bowdon station was convenient either on foot or by carriage. The great majority of the land in this area was owned by the Earl of Stamford.

From the top of The Downs (the street as known in 1990) there were hardly any houses towards Bowdon in the south or Dunham Town in the south-west, apart from a few large residences. Where St. Anne's Hospital still stands, appar-



The Beeches (St. Anne's Hospital)

ently incorporating some of the original building, was The Beeches occupied by Ibbotson Walker, merchant and manufacturer, with his wife, four children and ten servants. Where the Altrincham Girls' Grammar School was built at the turn of the century stood Bowdon Lodge occupied by John Finney, retired merchant, with his young wife and three servants. A few yards away, up what is now Woodville Road, was the Downs Cottage, which still stands, where in the 1850s lived Maxwell Roscoe, Surveyor to the Earl of Stamford, who in 1878 designed the present Altrincham Market Hall. Across the street, where the Telephone Exchange now stands, there appears to have been the Red House with its large ornate gardens extending down the Narrows to New Street. There were also a few houses near Oldfield Brow notably Park Farm and Oldfield House which was a school with some boarders at the corner of what are now Oldfield Road and Walton Road. This should not be confused with Oldfield Hall which used to stand in what is now John Leigh Park, of which more later.

For the rest, there was wide open space. Only a few lanes crossed the whole area. There was as yet no trace of Groby, Devisdale, Bentinck, Delamer, Bradgate or Cavendish Roads.



Downs Cottage

Yet by 1851 the Earl of Stamford had decided to build a church in the midst of this open space on the Dunham road with only a handful of houses within about a third of a mile radius. How did this happen? Before we consider the detailed scenario of this extraordinary development we must draw back and survey a somewhat broader background.

COTTON MASTERS AND MANCHESTER MEN

By the end of the 18th century the textile industry of England was well established as the source of the most important trade of the kingdom. Originally it involved the exploitation of wool as a major raw material, but increasingly the techniques were adapted to the manufacture of cotton goods for which the raw material was available cheaply and in large quantities from the slave plantations of the southern U.S.A. The considerable overseas market for cotton goods was progressively enlarged as the world was opened up for trade. So it was that by the end of the Napoleonic Wars the cotton industry had overtaken in importance the woollen industry which was largely confined to Yorkshire. Climate, water power and then coal conspired to concentrate the cotton industry in south Lancashire.

Thereafter the rise in the cotton trade was even more rapid. The consumption of cotton yarn grew from 150,000lbs in 1820 to 650,000lbs in 1850. Exports of cotton piece goods went up from 300 million yards to 1600 millions in the same period. Other textile trades such as wool and silk also prospered in Lancashire, but cotton was overwhelmingly predominant in the county, rising to around 90% of the industry by mid-century.

The export of cotton goods became by far the largest trading sector of the country. By mid-century again the industry accounted for some 10% of national income. This was a prodigious development, difficult to match in world history, and constituted the main driving force of modern capitalism which thus originated in Britain. Despite serious fluctuations in trade, so much capital was accumulated in the textile industry, and especially in cotton, that there was a scarcity of profitable outlets for it. Certainly there was no shortage of money for railway construction and, as we have already noted, in 30 years of mania after the Liverpool-Manchester line was opened in 1830, an astonishing frenzied pattern of some 9000 route miles, mainly financed by cotton profits, was constructed.

In Lancashire itself the progressive concentrations of workers into the factories required the rapid construction of living accommodation which took the form of mainly small back-to-back houses, with minimal sanitation and amenities, causing many towns to grow like diseased mushrooms. Typically, Oldham grew from 22,000 people in 1801 to 72,000 in 1851, whilst Manchester, replete with both industry and commerce, more than quadrupled from 70,000 to 300,000.

The number of cotton textile companies more than doubled between 1835 and 1850 from less than 700 to nearly 1500, whilst the average size of firm was in-

creasing all the time. Even by 1841 some 80 cotton firms out of a total of around 1000 employed over 500 people each whilst almost 150 had between 250 and 500 workpeople.

It is important for our story to appreciate that although this great cotton industry was indeed the driving force of the development of modern capitalism, it by no means exhibited all the features with which we have become familiar in the 20th century. For instance, the modern joint-stock company was essentially the creature of the railway boom, arising from the need to mobilise subscriptions of capital from a wide public. The textile magnates required comparatively little external funding, although borrowing from banks was not significant. Rapid as was the expansion of their businesses, they clearly made sufficient profits to maintain the hectic pace of development largely from their own resources.

The typical cotton textile firm was owned by a single master, by a family partnership or by a two-family partnership. Thus by mid-century there were perhaps some three thousand cotton masters of some substance. The predominance of the family basis of ownership and management meant that there was a strong hereditary element with perhaps half or more of the mid-century masters being the sons of previous owners. Allowing for a fair number of recruits to their ranks from other people in the textile business, including a very few operatives, the percentage of outsiders, mainly from the middle ranks of other industries and trade, was comparatively small.

The speed of the development of the cotton textile business in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was in part the outcome of revolutionary technical improvements which progressively resulted in the large-scale mechanisation of spinning, weaving and other processes and which were in turn stimulated by the rapid growth of business. Yet the ownership of the industry was hardly revolutionised. Rather, it appears that over several decades the experience gained by merchants and others who organised work done in houses and workshops was applied to the new technologies, absorbing and adapting them to the requirements and potential of expanding markets. Since this was the first of the modern factory industries and very profitable at that, there was neither time nor opportunity for outsiders to take over. The newcomers as self-made men were largely myths.

Thus by mid-century the typical Lancashire cotton master came from a family which had lived, worked and managed a business in the county for a generation or two. He was accustomed to enjoying comfortable conditions appropriately described as middle or upper middle class. Most often he continued to live close to his factory, close enough to be at hand to sort out quickly any trouble at the mill. Whatever the attractions of commuting from more delectable locations, they were slow to seduce the average cotton master. After all, there was much pleasant countryside quite close to the cotton towns.

Certainly the means with which to build grander houses, mansions even, away

from the familiar places, were by no means lacking. Most of the several thousand cotton masters of the mid-century had become millionaires (in 1990 money, even applying a multiplier of no more than 30 to 40 to 19th century figures) several times over before they died. Undoubtedly they constituted the most wealthy industrial grouping in the country, matched only perhaps by the world of finance and banking centred in London.

The grouping was, in fact, a very close one. Although of a superior social level, and increasingly well educated, the cotton masters and their families mixed but little with the landed gentry and were too numerous to be absorbed by them. A high degree of inter-marriage within the grouping reinforced its bonds and strengthened business connections. Yet the grouping was loose enough and the numbers large enough to permit strong links with a wide range of religious denominations. What distinguished them was not general attachment to a particular sect but much stronger, yet varied, non-conformist connections than the population as a whole or probably any other substantial social group. In total the number belonging to the nonconformist churches (including John Rylands!) just about equalled the Anglicans, with the Unitarians the largest single block but with Methodists and Congregationalists well represented.

The reasons for this nonconformist allegiance of a substantial proportion of the cotton magnates constitute an interesting subject for discussion but do not particularly concern us here. It is perhaps sufficient to note some consistency between breaking away from the established religion and displaying an enterprising attitude to the development of a major new industry as well becoming a new class which did not fit into the traditional pattern of society.

The 19th century industrial revolution was inevitably mirrored in the course of political change. The great Reform Act of 1832 opened up to the new industrial capitalists the opportunity to share power with the landed aristocracy and gentry who had hitherto controlled it. The new textile magnates soon began to seize this chance if only to protect their own interests in respect of such matters as control of tariffs and attempts by parliament to limit the hours of work in the factories, particularly of children. Initially they saw the Liberal Party as their ally and Free Trade as their watchword.

But it was in local government that the newly rich were predominant. It was only natural that, with their own businesses dominating the Lancashire towns, it would be the role of the industrial bosses to control such matters as the introduction of improved sanitation and water supply as well as the application of the Poor Law. In time more positive feelings of civic pride, philanthropy even, would come to have their influence. The inherent conflict between such motivations and the simple self-interest in economy in public expenditure must often have been painful, if not amusing, to behold. Certainly their various and sometimes conflicting emotions all constituted additional reasons for anchoring the mill-owners to their own Lancashire towns.

At mid-century, philanthropy does not appear to have loomed very large in the minds of the masters in spite of their success, their wealth and their religion, although they became increasingly aware that self-interest prompted some concern for the welfare of their workpeople. They were always conscious of the dangers of competition, of the risks of slumps in trade and even of demands from workers for more wages; and the day of the really philanthropic rich employer was to come later in the century. Virtue lay in industrial success, providing employment and making money, even to the point where a magnate effectively employing 150-200 people would typically take from his business each year, or most years, more than he paid his entire workforce.

The worst period of all for the cotton trade was the cotton famine in 1861-65 caused by the American Civil War. Many cotton operatives, of course, became unemployed and poor relief had to be paid to them. The average target payment was two shillings per head per week plus some provision of fuel and clothing for those in great need. It was strongly argued by Lord Derby and others that to pay more would have been to approach or exceed normal wages and so destroy the feeling of honest self-reliance and so "to demoralise a large proportion of the population and induce them to prefer the wages of charitable relief to the return of honest industry". In fact, as indicated before, it appears that the typical or average wage of a cotton operative before the cotton famine was a little over twelve shillings (60 pence) per week and total family income was rarely much more than £1 a week. In years of normal trading a cotton master who typically accumulated a fortune of £100,000 or more by the time he died or retired, must have been taking at least £100 to £200 a week out of his business, thus giving him the purchasing power to engage, one way or another, at least the same number of people that he employed in his factory.

As the years passed so the accumulation of wealth offered greater scope for both greater philanthropy and greater self-gratification. The apparent lack of sufficient profitable investment opportunities at home induced major investment overseas as well as the purchase of land in England. The possession of land was a conditional ticket of entry to an even higher social class. It also raised thoughts of living in the country. To aspire to such delights involved a willingness, at least on the part of a few, to leave the scene of their own industrial operations to move to comparative isolation. The unwelcoming attitude of the landed gentry to business interlopers might perhaps change with time.

There was an alternative course which, from around mid-century onwards, was clearly attractive to a minority. This involved building a mansion in an acre or two of ground in an attractive area favoured by a number of other people of similar class and wealth. This arrangement provided both seclusion and a degree of community. It might even afford a favoured suburban position in another urban society. Yet to make such a move one of the real cotton masters must have acted quite out of the character of his special industrial class which was so particularly localised to the factory towns of south Lancashire.

However, the cotton masters were not by any means the only wealthy people in this new industrial society. Clearly several categories of business and professional functions derived from the wonderful growth of the textile industry. First, there were the merchants who found markets for the torrent of goods; although in the home market a cotton master might do his own selling, and call himself "merchant" instead of, as well as, "manufacturer", there was obvious scope for the services of specialist merchants operating overseas.

Secondly, there were the engineers who designed and manufactured the textile machinery and whose business, as indeed the whole of the iron and (later) steel industry, was vastly enlarged by the railway boom. Theirs was the profession with the enticing vista of the long term future with increasing scope for the application of science to industry.

Then, of course, there were the bankers, solicitors and even the insurance men. Their services were indispensable to the new capitalists to a much greater extent than to the earlier traders. The bankers in particular were soon to become quite prominent among the well-to-do men who derived their wealth from services to the new industrialists.

There were other well-rewarded services of a less commercial nature. Victorian capitalists were perhaps not particularly renowned as great patrons of the arts but they did attach importance to the design of buildings both public and private. For town halls, churches and libraries, even railway stations, the services of architects were in considerable demand. For residences also, as we shall see, some of the wealthy men were interested enough in design to promote both the profession and to provide the material for a great battle about style and culture.

A perhaps more debatable manifestation of tasteful deployment of wealth was the growth in wine drinking. Figures of consumption are hard to come by, but wine merchants soon became quite prominent recruits to the ranks of the newly-rich. In some cases, they displayed business enterprise going beyond their own trade, as we shall see.

Now all these professions and businesses, the greatly increased scope of which was derived initially from the profitable exploits of the cotton masters, had one feature in common which differed from the circumstances of their progenitors. They did not need to operate in the cotton towns and many of them tended to work and live in Manchester. It is true that the metropolis of the north-west also boasted its own substantial representation of the cotton manufacturing industry, particularly in finishing trades like calico printing, but progressively it became more of a great commercial centre, albeit with a considerable industrial sector.

For the commercial men, the professional men and even the industrialists whose places of business were in Manchester and its close suburbs, the relative attractions of living in the country were greater than for the cotton masters in their Lancashire towns and the deterrents were less. There was not the same requirement to live 'on top of the job' nor the same concern for the well-being of

their own moderate sized town. As Manchester grew bigger and became horribly dirtier, more smog-ridden and less pleasant to live in, the attraction of living in the countryside became more seductive to the Manchester Men. Although they were perhaps not generally as wealthy as the real Cotton Masters, many of them could afford to build their mansions in places like Alderley Edge and 'Bowdon' (as it was called) when the new railway made commuting more feasible. Although they were somewhat derisively called 'cottontots' in those places, they were, in fact, rather a different breed from the men of Lancashire.

A new periodical, *'The British Architect'*, was launched from Manchester in 1874 and in its first number it included a major article on 'The Country Mansions of Manchester'. Proudly, it was stated that architecture flourished in Manchester, conjointly with classical music and grand 'Shakespearian realisations'. A Manchester warehouse was, externally, a palatial edifice. It was to be expected that the occupants of such buildings might be expected to enjoy homes of superior merit and there were, in fact, many examples within business reach of Manchester of 'domestic edifices' containing all the luxurious surroundings and conveniences that an architect of experience could devise. Such buildings, costing in total from £10,000 to £20,000 (perhaps, as we have suggested, up to £1 or £2 millions in 1990 conditions) constituted an intermediate class of building between a well-appointed large villa-residence and the palaces of the nobility, and might be described under the general term of Mansions.

The article explained that because of the prevailing wind which tended to blow the smoke of the city to the north-east, and because also of soil conditions, most of the mansions were in the south and south-west, especially where the railways facilitated travel, for example to Wilmslow and Alderley Edge and to Bowdon.

The requirements for the internal design of these mansions are set out in considerable and somewhat amusing detail. A billiards room was clearly almost essential – "large enough for the ladies of the family to participate in the game or be spectators" – with a lavatory in close proximity! (In practice a library seems to have been an acceptable alternative to a billiards room in some houses not large enough to provide both.) Of course, there had to be a butler's pantry, servants' hall, kitchen, scullery, cook's pantry, tradesmen's entrance, stabling and much else. Perhaps of particular note is the prescription that the upper or attic floor should be carried over the inferior (*sic*) parts of the house only, and contain, off the service stairs, the servants' rooms, boxroom, etc.

In subsequent issues over the years, *The British Architect* with its title enlarged to include *and Northern Engineer* carried a number of illustrations of country mansions, including some 'near Bowdon' which are incorporated in this historical review.

CREATION OF CHURCH AND PARISH

The seventh Earl of Stamford succeeded his grandfather in 1845 when he was only 18 years old thus inheriting the opportunity to play a major part in the mid-century drama of the development of modern Altrincham. His scope for this role was based on his great landed wealth, including ownership of most of the land in the crucial south-westerly sector of the area surrounding the town. Many major landowners were facing pressure at this time for the release of land for building houses and, because of the situation of his estate, the Earl of Stamford was among those feeling the greatest obligation to give ground, although he was not empowered to sell land until he was 21 years old in 1848.

The personal attitude of the young man to this challenge is far from clear. He must have been somewhat preoccupied with more private affairs. Until 1848 he was at Cambridge University where his time was made more pleasurable by the company of the daughter of his servant there with whom he eloped to Brighton to marry her. After her death in 1854 he married a lady who had performed on horseback in a circus. Neither of his wives were well received by the local gentry around Altrincham nor by the church at Bowdon, so he decided to live at his Enville estate in Staffordshire. For the second half of the 19th century, in fact, there was no earl in residence at Dunham.

For the Earl to respond to this degree of ostracism at Dunham Massey by deciding by 1851 to build a great new church within little more than half a mile of St. Mary's at Bowdon is quite astonishing. When one appreciates that there was only a handful of houses within a third of a mile of the chosen site for the new church, it becomes apparent that one is confronted by a historical mystery of a rather special nature.

Bowdon was an ancient and well established agricultural village with its mediaeval church of St. Mary's of somewhat uncertain date. By 1850 it was becoming clear that the old church would soon need to be replaced, a project which was, in fact, accomplished during the decade. Around its commanding presence on the hill with fine views, especially over the Bollin river and the plain to the south, had developed an attractive village which included a number of middle and upper class houses. Notable among these was High Lawn built in the 1840s by William Neild, a leading member of a Manchester calico printing firm, who commuted daily from Bowdon well before the railway came. He became Manchester's second mayor from 1840 to 1842.

The parish of Bowdon extended over a great area including Dunham Massey, Altrincham, Timperley, Baguley, Ashley, Hale, Bollington and Partington, as well as the township of Bowdon itself. From 1798 it had benefited from the

building of an auxiliary chapel-at-case at St. George's, Altrincham (on the Manchester Road beyond the Old Market Place) at which regular services were held by the chapel's curate. Although in 1837 it acquired both an organ and a vicarage, it was not formally converted into a regular district church until 1860 after it had been twice extended in the previous few years. In 1868 it was accorded its own parish.

The Vicar of Bowdon, William Galfridus, was therefore, in 1850, a personage of considerable stature. He lived in a substantial vicarage with his wife, five children and eleven servants, a household considerably surpassing that of anyone else around, including William Neild, except for the Earl at Dunham Hall. It is in any event, even discounting the story of a major difference with the seventh Earl, a matter of interesting conjecture as to what the Vicar's opinion was of the latter's plan to build a great new church between Bowdon and St. George's, a church indeed without acknowledged parish or evident congregation. This intervention hardly seems to have fitted into the scheme of Bowdon parish.

It is, of course, conceivably possible that there was some discussion between the two eminent gentlemen as to the prospects of major housing development in the vicinity of the planned church. Account would have been taken of the additional accessibility afforded by the new railway, particularly after Bowdon station was opened. There were obviously some precedents to demonstrate the effect of railway lines in encouraging house-building in the vicinity of new stations. The example of Alderley Edge where a station was opened some years earlier was close at hand, although its development was quite limited and indeed was the subject of financial inducement by the railway company.

Our conjectures on this subject are assisted somewhat by a fascinating map among the church papers held at the Cheshire Record Office. It is dated 1850 and shows the district proposed to be allocated to the new church. Existing houses are shown in their approximate shapes, all very much the same as in the 1838 Tithe Map. In addition, some 50 little square shapes have been added apparently to denote where new houses might be built in the future. These extend along the church side of the Altrincham road with just two on the same side in the Knutsford direction (where Glenfield and Dunham Mount were soon to be built). A further 18 houses are shown in the area north of the church, mostly down Gorsey Lane, but none in Dunham New Park or the rest of Oldfield. St. Margaret's Road (apart from the northern half of the east side) is lined with squares, as also are the west side of Woodville and the north side of Bowdon Roads. There are also a few scattered across the north of the Devisdale. The map appears to have been formally approved by the Church Commissioners and confirmed in 1854.

There is no doubt that it was optimistic to expect that many people, at least in the short run, would be tempted to live near the new church, a considerable distance from work opportunities or trains, particularly as there were more con-

venient sites available. Certainly the Earl had no intention of inviting a large number of ordinary or middling people to settle there. He had, in fact, already made it known in 1849, that, much as he valued the privacy of his Dunham Massey estate, he was prepared to make some acres available for housing further from the park.

The first new development appears to have begun in 1849-50 in Albert Square, south of St. Johns Road, under arrangements of which little is known. The next activity was in and around the road now known as the Higher Downs on land sold, subject to chief rents and to covenants requiring houses of a certain standard to be built on it, by the Earl of Stamford to five speculative builders. This latter story is fully told in Peter Kemp's book entitled *'Higher Downs Altrincham – A Short History'*. Included in the development was Beechfield off the Higher Downs and South Bank round the corner on what is now Cavendish Road as well as Delamer House in what is now known as Delamer Road.

It is not appropriate here to repeat much of the interesting information in Peter Kemp's book. It is, however, relevant to note that the early occupants of the new houses constituted quite a miscellany of middle and perhaps upper middle class people, some of whom moved from poorer houses in Altrincham.



The Higher Downs



Delamer House

Only a minority seem to have been people who were full or part-time commuters, including a newspaper owner, a Clerk and Superintendent Registrar (who was also a poet) and two academics. Most of the houses had attics for living-in-servants and some others were used as apartments, lodgings and boarding houses. For the most part the houses were rented rather than owned, a system which endured quite widely for at least several decades.

A surprising aspect of the area south and south west of The Downs, including the Higher Downs, Delamer Road and a part of St. John's Road, was that it was included in the ancient township of Dunham Massey. However, it seems to have remained in the parish of Bowdon after the new St. Margaret's Church became the parish church of Dunham Massey. One suspects a battle royal over the parish boundary. Credence to this supposition is given by the 1850 map referred to above which shows that the original plan was to include the Higher Downs in the new parish of Dunham Massey whereas the actual boundary seems to have been drawn down Bowdon Road a little further north. It is not, in fact, clear as to when St. Margaret's officially became the parish church of Dunham Massey.

This same map demonstrates the extraordinary lengths to which the church authorities had to go to provide a parish congregation for St. Margaret's. From

the foot of the Higher Downs the proposed boundary ran along what is now St. John's Road, across Ashley Road, along Hale Road and encompassed Hale Moss before returning north-west along Moss Lane. It then continued across George Street and Dunham Road before proceeding over the country to Oldfield Road. Thus a large part of Altrincham was include in order to bring enough people within the parish boundaries. This was later to cause difficulties with St. George's which sought to claim the title of the parish church of Altrincham.

In 1867, when St. John's Church in St. John's Road was founded as the 'Poor People's Church', part of Dunham Massey parish was ceded to the newer church, i.e. the area south-east of The Downs and Railway Street. It has been said that this change was welcome to most of the parishioners of St. Margaret's who were happy to lose the poorer members of the congregation. However, for the time being the mainly working-class area between New Street and Railway Street remained in the parish of Dunham Massey, although a separate place of worship was provided for it some 20 years later, as we shall see.

This review of the problems of parish boundaries brings us back to the basic question as to why the decision was taken in 1851 to build the new church. We have mentioned the uncharitable possibility of a somewhat unsavoury dispute between the Earl and the Vicar of Bowdon, the two most notable men in the area. We have considered the more complimentary view that it was part of a planned development of the Dunham Massey township. This latter idea might have been coupled with the need to provide an additional place of worship for the growing population in the area, but if this were so, could not a more convenient place have been chosen?

In any event why was this particular place on the Dunham Road selected? Clearly, it is a magnificent and prestigious site on the main road. It must be remembered that no roads were very good in the middle of the last century. What is now St. Margaret's Road, for instance, was only a narrow lane. So there was some advantage in the site being on the main road for reasonable access from Altrincham and Dunham. This was probably why an alternative site a little nearer the Higher Downs, known as Racefield, was rejected. The selected site was undoubtedly the finest spot on the road for its views to the north not then besmirched by industry, oil refineries and power stations. From this high place the church with its lofty spire could be proudly observed from Dunham Massey Hall and far around. It was perhaps all too tempting a prospect.

To the immediate west of the site is Gorsey Lane which used to go straight across the main Dunham Road into what was Turf Lane, part of the path from Hale through St. John's Road and Woodville Road to Oldfield and Sinderland. However, Turf Lane itself also led to the Firs, then known as Burying Lane. By around 1860 Turf Lane was completely refurbished and realigned to become St. Margaret's Road approaching the Dunham Road at a precise right angle at a point well chosen to afford the best view of the new church for people travelling along it. This realignment accounts for the 'dog-leg' which has to be negotiated



St. Margaret's Church from St. Margaret's Road, 19th century. (Photograph kindly supplied by Altrincham Public Library.)

by cars now crossing the main road and proceeding down Gorsey Lane at the west end of the church.

One local history book says that Turf Lane was lined with fir trees just like the Firs, and one can certainly find two very tall fir trees either side of Groby Road along the line of the old lane. But it is also interesting that there is a line of

ancient oak trees from the top of Gorsey Lane, straight across the Memorial ground and right through to Groby Road. There can be no doubt that this was the position of the old Turf Lane.

The church itself was originally proposed to be built of brick but there was a change of mind on this aspect also and competing designs were sought for a structure clad in Yorkshire stone made into the shapes of bricks and stone slab facings. It is a striking building generally described as being in the perpendicular style and certainly with an attractively Gothic interior. It must have been particularly impressive with its tall spire which was ultimately declared to be unsafe in the age of the automobile. It could be said, however, that the spire was too tall in relation to the original length of the church.

The dignity of this majestic building had to be maintained by its immediate neighbours and indeed it was clearly considered important to ensure there were a few neighbours from the outset. So a vicarage was built on the east side along the main road, right across the boundary between the townships of Dunham Massey and Altrincham. Little further development proceeded in the early years in this direction, possibly because the land was in Altrincham, although it appears that one substantial residence called Oak House was built next to the vicarage by 1860 and occupied by one Richard Broadbent, a surgeon, who had been mayor of Altrincham.

In the other direction along the main road, to the west, arrangements were made by 1852 for two major houses to be built, *Glenfield* the one further away, and *Dunham Mount*, so that these two suitable neighbouring edifices were also completed in 1855 when the church was consecrated and handed over the new vicar who had been the curate at St. Mary's Bowdon. The conveyancing arrangement for these first two great houses is not entirely clear, but it appears that it was at one stage proposed that one Samuel Barratt, wine merchant of Altrincham, should take title to the sites, subject to payment of chief rent. He would have been only the first of a number of such merchants who figure in our story, several of them as dealers in land. The conveyance for the Dunham Mount site of 1.2 acres required the payment of £45 p.a. and stipulated that no house of a value less than £2,000 should be built on the land and not more than two houses in all.

It seems clear that the sites of Glenfield and Dunham Mount were, in the end, conveyed separately to Joseph Leese, 'cotton spinner and manufacturer' and to William Horsfall, 'merchant of Manchester'. The former was, in 1861, accompanied by his wife, three children and four servants; the latter by his wife, daughter and three servants plus the coachman and his family who lived just further down Gorsey Lane in the Mount Lodge.

Joseph Leese was a partner in the cotton spinning and manufacturing firm of Kershaw, Leese and Co. which owned the India and Mersey mills at Heaton Norris near Stockport. He was a prominent congregationalist and was reported by Clyde Binfield as playing a leading role in the business and civic life of Stockport.

His son Joseph Francis Leese graduated in Cambridge in 1868, became Recorder of Manchester from 1893-1914, MP for Accrington from 1892 to 1909 and was created a baronet in 1908. His own son Sir William Hargreaves Leese became Solicitor to the Bank of England.

Glenfield has unfortunately been replaced by modern apartment blocks, but Dunham Mount still sits proudly facing the church across the top of the lane and securely occupied by a finance company. It has a broad impressive but not architecturally distinguished frontage in similar material and somewhat similar style to the church and was clearly a suitable neighbour from the outset. It stood in grounds of about 1.2 acres, but Horsfall in 1855 bought over four acres to the north of both Dunham Mount and Glenfield which explains the lack of other building in this area until much later. Horsfall and his family settled at Dunham Mount at least until the 1880s.

Across the main road from the Mount is the large war memorial garden which was presumably left as an open space to provide an appropriate setting for the church which it certainly does although apparently enjoyed by very few people. On the fourth corner of the dog-leg cross-roads and directly across the Altrincham road from the church is the 1.5 acre site of Beech Lawn also now occupied



Dunham Mount

by modern apartments. In 1857 this was sold to Joseph Fildes, a distiller, who in 1861 was living in the house with his wife, three children and six servants. From 1872 to 1877 he was a director of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, of which more later. By 1888 he had died but Mrs Ruth Fildes was still there. A small curiosity is that in 1868 Joseph Fildes bought from the Earl the adjoining site to the south on which Limehurst was built by 1870. He may have done this to control the identity of his neighbour, or he may just have been dealing in the land and financing the building of a house.

Only two other houses in this area close to Dunham Road were built and occupied by 1861, both of them on the land to the west of the present Highgate road. Next to the main road and across Highgate Road from Glenfield was *Park Gate* on an acre of ground which seems to have been made available around 1858 to Alexander Don Cuffley an architect said to be from Manchester but who in 1860 was living somewhere in The Downs area. In 1859 the site and a partly built house were transferred to Edward Philippi, a twist merchant, who appears to have reached some financial arrangement with Mr. Cuffley in respect of his expenditure on the house, although it seems to have been by way of a rental payment. At any rate, in 1861 Mr. Philippi lived at Park Gate with his wife, seven children and eight servants. By 1871, however, this family had gone and the house was occupied by the household of Joseph Cocksey Lee, of whom more later.

Finally, in this first decade in this area, also on an acre of ground to the north of Park Gate, was built *Oldfield Bank*. The lease of the land was granted in 1857 to Richard Massey a slate merchant. The conveyance notes that the site had earlier been taken over by William Horsfall of Dunham Mount apparently to extend his estate still further. We certainly know that in a 1860 Directory, Richard Massey of Oldfield Bank is described as 'gentleman', but in the 1861 Census he is shown as a 'retired merchant' living with his wife, four sons, two visitors and two servants (perhaps the visitors helped in the house!) In 1868, Richard Massey acquired from the Earl a further 0.25 acre strip of land to the north of Oldfield Bank, for the princely sum of £7 2s 6d per annum, which was to be kept open for 'the preservation of views'.

Park Gate has been so extended and refurbished that it has effectively disappeared from view but Oldfield Bank remains in use as a nursing home. It is a rather plain and not very distinguished building, not so attractive as its northerly neighbour Morningside, which was built by 1870 beyond the cordon sanitaire of open land and occupied by Catherine Kerr, a widow. The latter is also now a nursing home and is being extended by a large additional building.

This concludes the tally of the substantial houses built in the close vicinity of the new church in the first decade since its conception. Apart from the vicarage, there were two by the time the church was completed in 1855 and four more by 1860. This was not exactly a whirlwind rate of development, adding less than 100 to the parishioners of St. Margaret's, including children and servants living-in.

There were, however, other developments a little further away, which merit a separate chapter.

Before we move on, however, it is worth taking stock of who were these men who could afford to live near the new church so far from business operations. Only one consistently claimed to be a cotton spinner – Joseph Leese and he came from Manchester and his wife from Rio de Janeiro. William Horsfall generally described himself as ‘merchant of Manchester’ but sometimes he was declared as a cotton spinner. For the rest, we have a twist merchant, a retired slate merchant, a wine merchant and a surgeon. This hardly looks like a list of real cotton masters and one wonders, in fact, to what extent they were even regular commuters to Manchester

The Earl maintained closed control over the development of the sites leased to all these people. It was normal for a conveyance to require land to be fenced within a month and for a house of a minimum value to be built within a year. The design had to be approved by the Earl and the material was specified. In the most prestigious positions stone was required, or sometimes either stone or white brick. In some cases the specification related to those parts of the house visible from the road. Clearly, this wealthy suburban estate was being firmly planned. Until the 1870s payment for plots of land was entirely by way of chief rent at the rate of £30 to £40 per acre, with no initial payment. It is difficult to detect a pattern of variations within this quite narrow range. It is interesting to note that, for a one acre plot, the rent approximates to the typical wage of the male cotton worker in Lancashire.

There is one interesting tailpiece to this saga of the 1850s surrounding the new parish church of Dunham Massey which may provide one more clue as to why it was built or at least add a twist to the story. In 1859 the son of William Neild of High Lawn, Bowdon, was married in St. Margaret’s church to a lady from Bowdon. This seems very surprising indeed for the Neild family with its close connections to Bowdon – surprising that is until one remembers that St. Mary’s church was being rebuilt at that time. The recollection raises the question as to whether it was conceivably possible that there was a connection between the need to rebuild St. Mary’s and the decision to build a new church? On reflection, it hardly seems likely that anyone supposed that the site on the Dunham Road would be suitable for a parish church for Bowdon. But if another site nearer Bowdon had been proposed which would have been tolerably convenient for Bowdon, Dunham Massey and part of Altrincham, including the Higher Downs area, would not that have made sense, at least as much sense as building two churches in the 1850s, one of them without any natural parish?

It is perhaps more realistic to remember the atmosphere of conflict between the Earl and the local gentry and church. If one can postulate a gesture of defiance on the part of the Earl in establishing his new church, named after his cherished sister, it is not too difficult to imagine a responding challenge from Bow-

don in the decision to rebuild their own church. There may be a more plausible rationalisation, but it has not yet been produced. We have to end on a question mark. There can be no certainty about this history unless new evidence is brought to light. One's sense of wonder and even astonishment about the whole situation is heightened by the realisation that the Earl did not even attend the consecration of his great new church in 1855. Presumably he was preoccupied with courting a second wife.

4

FASHIONING OF MARGARET'S ROAD – THE 1850S

The first men to be married in the elegant new church-in 1856 – was one Henry Travis, an architect of 'The Downs'. Around the same time this man purchased a modest plot of land on which a most elegant house was built in which he was living in 1859 and 1860 and also in 1864, although he does not appear in the 1861 census. By 1864 the house had been called *Devisdale Cottage*, appropriately attractive, although today it is *Beechthorpe*. The name Devisdale moved across the road by 1871 to a house of that name occupied by Arthur Ransome, physician.

It would be most interesting to know more about Henry Travis since one has to suppose that he either designed his own house or that he at least approved its design. More than that, the design was clearly very much admired since the next two houses going north along St. Margaret's Road (at first called Stamford



Highfield

Road) towards the new church are very similar, although possibly a little larger. Perhaps it is as well that they are partly hidden by trees at the front since otherwise their combined beauty might well turn the heads of too many car drivers. It seems highly likely that Mr Travis was one of the partners of the Manchester firm of architects Travis and Mangnall who designed Bowdon Downs Congregational Church and various buildings in and around Manchester, most notably the Watts warehouse in Portland Street in 1851 – now the Britannia Hotel – with every floor displaying a different style.

The second house along the road is Highfield and third is now called Fernroyd, although the name does not appear in the 1860s and 1870s. The latter house, which is no doubt typical of the three, is designed as a slightly irregular square with a roof pitched quite low because on the inside of the square it slopes inwards, enabling rainwater to be collected and drained into a storage tank. The main staircase is contained in a kind of island in the centre of the house with passages running either side of it from the front hall, a children's dream of a playground.

Although not really in the mansion class, the house is a large and roomy villa with a library, lounge, dining room and breakfast room, all spacious. Clearly it was designed for living-in-servants, with their own bedrooms and staircase as well as call-bells to answer from the kitchen. To go from the owners' living rooms to the kitchen area one has to descend the regulation two steps since servants were not allowed to occupy the same floor level as their employers.

Apart from the pleasant and spacious layout of the interior, it is above all the exterior appearance which is appealing. The low roof overhangs the higher of the two floors by perhaps a couple of feet. At a lower level the ground floor of most of the house is overhung by a kind of canopy at an angle less than that of the roof and projecting a foot or two further. The windows are particularly attractive, each being tall and somewhat narrow, surmounted by a semi-circular arch, and grouped in twos and threes. The houses are clad in the whitish brick typical of the area, although Highfield is now covered in a white stucco which makes it look even more Italianate or colonial, however one likes to style the attractive design.

In 1858 the Reverend John Edward Booth purchased from the Earl of Stamford the land on which both Fernroyd and Highfield stand and undertook to build a house on it within a year. It appears that he first built Highfield and lived in it for a while, but in 1860 he conveyed the Fernroyd part of the site to Robert Heywood McKearn, a Manchester surgeon. It is possible that by this time the house had been built, since it seems very likely that the two were planned together, especially as they are basically mirror images of each other, although Highfield has an extra three storey addition at the rear. A certain mystery attends both the Reverend Booth and Mr. McKearn. Although the former appears in a directory of c.1859-60 as living in 'Stamford Road', he does not feature in the 1861 Census nor in any directory thereafter. Mr. McKearn is even more surprising since he disappears altogether, not appearing in any directory or census.

At Highfield in 1861 lived John Hilton, Manchester merchant and manufacturer, with three servants. By 1864 he had been replaced by Fred Tunder, a retired merchant who was still there in 1871; by 1878 he was replaced by Alexander MacKenna, an independent minister, with his wife, five children and four servants, although the name of the house is recorded in the 1881 Census as High Lawn. On the Reverend Mackenna, more later.

In 1871 it appears likely that Anthony Evill, a shipping merchant, was living at Beechthorpe, and Thomas Stephenson, an India Merchant, with his wife, three children and four servants at Fernroyd. However, the latter names does not appear until a 1878 directory and the 1881 Census when Thomas C. Barraclough, a civil engineer, was in residence with his wife, mother-in-law, a visitor and two servants. In the same year the name Beechthorpe is identified for the first time, occupied by another surgeon, Charles Sharp Smith, with two servants.

The transient nature of the inhabitants of these three houses is somewhat extraordinary and not at all typical of houses in the immediate neighbourhood. For instance, the next house northwards in the direction of the church was named *Osborne Villa*, no doubt after the royal house on the Isle of Wight also built in the 1850s, and was occupied by one Sigismund Schloss, a general merchant of German origin, from the time it was built around 1859 at least until 1881. His household, in addition to his wife, consisted in 1861 of five children and five servants, losing one of each by 1871.

Unfortunately Osborne Villa, later called Westfield, has been replaced by modern apartments, one of the two of the noble houses in St. Margaret's Road so destroyed, the other being Devisdale House. However, from a drawing by Thomas Pitfield, kindly lent me by Mrs Fowler, who lived at Westfield for 26 years until 1973, it appears that, allowing for the vast difference in scale, it had a distinct resemblance to Osborne House. The windows have the same rectangular shape, with a little decoration above those on the upper floor, and the bay windows on the ground floor are not very different from those in the royal residence. Altogether it had an attractive dignified appearance rather more like the next house towards the church than the Italianate villas to the south. Like Highfield it had a three-floor extension at the rear.

A narrow lane still runs from the rear of the site down to Woodville Road. This appears to be one of the legacies of Sigismund Schloss, who bought more land during the 1860s so that his garden became quite extensive. There was another man called Reuben Levi, a manufacturing clothier, who in 1861 lived with his wife, four children and three servants just around the corner from Beechthorpe in Bowdon Road at a house called *Beech Bank*, who was also somewhat acquisitive as far as land was concerned. Between them, Schloss and Levi owned most of the land behind the first three houses on St. Margaret's Road right down to Woodville Road. In an 1878 directory it is recorded that one Daniel Schloss, possibly a son of Sigismund, lived at *Harefield House* which seems actually to



Osborne Villa (Westfield). Drawing by Thomas Pitfield.

have been sited on Woodville Road and may well have been built much earlier, even by 1850. In the 1881 Census he is described as a South American merchant with four children and five servants.

There was certainly one other house, along Bowdon Road, next to Reuben Levi's Beech Bank. This was a somewhat more modest house called *Beech Mount* which was occupied in 1860 by Robert S. Edelstein, calico printer, in 1864 by a Mrs. Edelstein, and in 1871 by a gentleman of independent means, John H. Sutcliffe, with his wife, two sons and two servants. By 1878 the occupier is Mr. Allen Sutcliffe, also described as 'gentleman', who was still there in 1881.

We have been diverted along Bowdon Road, even to that end of Woodville Road, from our slow progress along the houses built in St. Margaret's Road in the 1850s. If we now return to that elegant street, to the north of Osborne Villa, we discover three 'double houses' which in 1990 certainly constitute six separate residences, but this may not always have been the case. In fact, there were most likely six pairs of houses, the second three round the corner in Woodville Road but the first of these three, *Grove House*, has been replaced by a modern residence of the same name. All six buildings appear to have been constructed in the period 1853 to 1856, i.e. earlier than the four houses further south, and all by speculative builders.



Woodville/Parkview

The first of the six, next to the former Osborne Villa, bears today the two names *Park House* and *Danebury*. The latter does not appear in the Victorian records and the former took the form of *Park View* which was occupied at least from 1860 to 1878 by three sisters, the Misses Wilson, and a servant, recorded as living on the proceeds of house ownership. One wonders whether they might have run some kind of school. However, in 1871 the house was also occupied by Julia Wood with her niece and servant. It seems likely that there were two separate residences and indeed the building looks very much as if it were designed for such occupation. Each half has its own similar doorway, between two large windows and in general the two ‘houses’ are much alike, plain and square looking, although one has four bay windows to the other’s one.

Somewhat similar general comments may be made about the next pair of houses, North and South *Woodville* which seem to have been separately occupied from their earliest days, although there was just one the name – *Woodville*. The design is, however, different from that of its neighbour, with a mixture of squarish-shaped windows and the attractive narrower ones topped with arches similar to those in Fernroyd and the other houses at the beginning of the road.

However, the building at the end of this row which stands across the corner with Woodville Road looks rather as if it were originally meant to be a single house – called *Westlind*, as one part is today. Yet by 1878, the name *Leahurst*, which the other part now bears, appeared in a directory. Going round the corner, Grove House was occupied by single family at least from 1860 to 1871 consisting of James Watson, a calico printer, his wife four children and seven servants. It may, in fact, have been a single house.

All the houses mentioned above were built by 1860. This is a total of 18 properties, counting the three pairs on St. Margaret's Road and the two on Woodville Road as two each and Grove House as one. None of these were nearly in the mansion class but rather substantial middle class houses with provision for several servants and, in most cases, no coach houses. Mr. Levi's Beech Bank and possibly Mr. Schloss's Osborne Villa were in a somewhat higher category.

There were two further houses in this area built by 1860. It seems that across the Woodville Road from Grove House was *Darley Grove*, probably of a similar scale to most of the others and occupied in 1861 by Alfred Richardson, cotton manufacturer, with his wife, five children, three visitors and three servants. By 1864 this family had apparently been replaced by the Reverend Powell, the curate at St. George's church. The occupants of the other two houses included in 1861 Francis Milne, cotton spinner, employing 200 people, with his wife, six children and five servants – probably in sole occupancy at *Westlind* – and Edwin Waters, cotton manufacturer, and John Ollivant, silversmith, at Woodville.

The remaining house is of rather greater importance. In December 1858 William Melland, a cotton and linen manufacturer, bought from the Earl a site of 1.5 acres on the north corner of St. Margaret's Road and Woodville Road, next to *Darley Grove* and opposite *Westlind*. Its western boundary was marked on the plan attached to the conveyance as bounded by 'the road leading to the new church as proposed to be diverted'. Clearly, this was to be St. Margaret's Road which, as we noted earlier, was moved from the position of the old lane so as to meet the Dunham Road at right angles opposite the new church, some 50 yards east of the entry point of the former lane.

There were certain problems with the line of the new road. For one thing, the old lane is shown in the 1838 and 1850 maps as having a kind of S-shape with a sharp lurch to the right or west as one reaches the entrance to Woodville Road going away from the church. It seems quite clear that by the time the decision was taken on the realignment, some of the houses on the east side of the lane had been built a few years earlier. Further, the line at right angles to Dunham Road would have taken the new road across the Devisdale and far west of the point it needed to reach at the junction of Bowdon Road and the Higher Downs (including a short stretch of what is now Cavendish Road). So a smoothly curved line had to be drawn which probably went significantly closer to Woodville House and Park View than the old lane did. This seems the likely explanation as to why those two double houses are so close to St. Margaret's Road.



Holmeside (originally Racefield)

The house which William Melland had built is now called *Holmeside* but he was always said to be living at *Racefield* until he moved across to Hill Carr less than ten years later. However, around 1866 another house was built just north of *Holmeside* which was at first known as *Oak Hill*, but later became *Racefield* (see below). Clearly the latter was a popular name which was also applied to the area around what is now Groby Road as well as later to the road which runs from that road to the main Dunham Road.

In any event the original *Racefield* house was a much grander place than any of those we have reviewed along St. Margaret's Road further from the church. It is a rather plain dignified building in white brick with a mixture of rectangular windows and the narrow ones with arches at the top we have noticed elsewhere. It is clearly significant that this house is closer to the church, bearing comparison with those across the main road as well as with *Beech Lawn*. In 1861 its household was not particularly large with only three living-in servants for a family of wife and four children, but Mr. Melland was an industrialist of some substance and a leading member of Bowdon Downs Congregational Church. He was senior partner of Melland and Coward manufacturers of linen and cotton checks, etc. at Heaton Mersey, Stockport where they also had a bleach works and cotton spinning mill. We shall return to Mr. Melland.

The building by 1860 of some 20 substantial houses on or near the eastern side of the southern half of St. Margaret's Road could well be seen as a natural extension of the development in the early 1850s of the Higher Downs and adjacent areas, but it is surely significant that it went in the direction of the church. Certainly the new houses were quite conveniently situated for access on foot to Bowdon Station along either Woodville or Bowdon roads, and it seems likely that a fair proportion of the original occupants were commuters to Manchester. Certainly the cotton men all seem to have been Manchester (or Stockport) Men. Nearly all their children, apart from the youngest, were born in Manchester. Francis Milne of Westlind, the employer of 200 people, came originally from Oldham and is the nearest we have to a non-Manchester cotton master, but even he seems to have lived recently in the textile metropolis.

Another Stockport manufacturer was Joseph Sidebotham, senior partner in a calico printing works at Strines, who was living in 1877 at *The Beeches* across the road from No. 8 Higher Downs where his nephew T.A. Coward the naturalist lived. The latter was the grandson of Edward Coward, the partner of William Melland.



The Firs (Bowdon): Hans Richter's House

In this first decade of the development of Dunham Massey very few additional houses seem to have been built near the Higher Downs or what is now Delamer Road. In *South Bank* on what is now Cavendish Road, it is interesting to note that there lived in 1861 one Joseph Thompson, a cotton weaver and merchant, claiming to employ 104 men and 537 women at his mill in Ardwick, although he was only 27 years of age. He was a deacon of Bowdon Downs Church from 1858 to 1866, and became a councillor and alderman of Manchester City Council.

There were, however, developments in the 1850s in another direction from the Higher Downs – along the right-hand side of the continuation of Bowdon Road towards Bowdon itself now known as The Firs. By 1860 there were probably five or six pairs of houses well along the road towards Bowdon. The style is very different from that of St. Margaret's Road – taller and narrower, typically with the front aspect displaying a two-floor and three-floor section alongside each other. The general rather plain pattern is somewhat similar along the road, perhaps indicating the work of a speculative developer providing houses for people who were comfortably off but not by any means rich. Some of the houses appear to have each accommodated two households. Among the occupants in 1861 were a retired farmer, a tea salesman, two yarn agents or dealers, a boarding-house keeper, a surgeon, a landholder, a solicitor and a bankruptcy court messenger, as well as a calico printer and a cotton spinner and merchant. Perhaps this is an even more diverse collection of people in Bowdon township and parish than that in Dunham Massey.

The Firs and the rest of Bowdon are really outside the scope of the present study. The foregoing facts are mentioned because neither area is an island and the development of the one may throw light on the other. Certainly The Firs seems to have provided homes for somewhat similar people to those who occupied the first houses on St. Margaret's Road, but, on the whole, their means were slightly more modest. Their houses have a particular attraction as a quite dignified, restrained and harmonious whole, whereas St. Margaret's has more variety and individual attractiveness, developing into the grander homes of the quite well-to-do as the extension of Altrincham meets the comparative splendour and elegance of Dunham Massey.

Of course, Bowdon would soon blossom into the small separate world of really wealthy mansions along Green Walk which, at their extremity in Denzell House, almost linked up with the equally extravagant growth of great, as well as not-so-great, houses spreading from the very precincts of the new church. The plans of the Earl, or his agents, were developing steadily, so that by 1860 there was a nucleus of rich neighbours for his church and a burgeoning avenue of handsome houses leading to it. Some 25 new houses were formed into the shape of a simple but rough cross, which in the succeeding decades would grow branches deeper into the woods and fields.

5

THE 1860S: COTTON FAMINE AND COTTON WEALTH

The housing developments in Dunham Massey and Bowdon in the late 1850s may be considered as rather natural, although planned, extensions of those of the early part of the decade in the Higher Downs Area, except for the few major residences close to the new church of St. Margaret. Clearly there were special forces of attraction drawing these developments in two almost diametrically opposite directions, i.e. the new church and the old village of Bowdon. There were other forces, too, which channelled the developments in two divergent lines, i.e. the existence of old lanes and of the great open space of the Devisdale. It is not clear just what constraints restricted the latter's development for housing but in practice this was confined to the very fringes. In the case of St. Margaret's Road, it may be of some significance that the western or Devisdale side was not sold for housing until the late 1860s.

In the main the new houses were suitable for about the same comfortably off middle classes, including some professional people, rather than the rich or near-rich. There were some apparent exceptions to this general picture, particularly in the shape of several cotton manufacturers employing a substantial number of people, but it may be that these men had not yet accumulated great wealth. Certainly they seem to have moved on quite soon. However, there was something of a trend, especially in St. Margaret's Road, to a more up-market kind of house by the late 1850s, mainly comfortably detached rather than in a pair as in the middle of the decade, with a fair amount of ground as well as more distinctive architecture, albeit striking in groups rather than individually.

If one looks for an early extension of this trend in the early 1860s one is disappointed, for new housing developments were scarce in the Dunham Massey area, with only one or two more residences in the Delamer Road area and one down the slope of Gorsey Lane north of the new church, at *The Knoll*. Here again, we have to look beyond the local situation to try to understand the hiatus in house building and indeed in the sale of land by the Earl. In an earlier chapter we have mentioned the cotton famine of 1861-65 caused by the American Civil War and specifically by the blockade of southern U.S. ports by government ships. The cotton industry of south Lancashire suffered severely from being deprived of most of its raw material. As we have seen, many factory workers were unemployed and obliged to live on little more than two shillings per head per week. The factory owners, the merchants and the professional people who were dependant on the industry no doubt had reserves of wealth which saved them from such penury. In

fact, the reduction in business was for many offset by high prices for the goods they did have for sale. However, many people would obviously be deterred from investing in new residences in the country, even if they had the resources in those hard times. Like all wars, the end of this calamity was impossible to predict accurately and its consequences were very uncertain.

This would appear to be the reason why The Knoll was the only additional house to be built near St. Margaret's until the late 1860s. It was not a large site – somewhat over half an acre – which was sold in 1863 to Benjamin Dennison Naylor, a cotton merchant from Deansgate, Manchester, but it was enlarged in the late 1870s as the lines of new roads around particularly Grey Road were settled. However, Mr. Naylor was a man with special interests which made him no ordinary cotton merchant. During the 1860s he erected a telescope at his residence which was later reported to have been used to observe the transit of Venus in 1874. He is himself something of a mystery in that by 1871 he seems to have disappeared, possibly died, since in the Census of that year only the two Misses Naylor with two servants are recorded as living at The Knoll where they remained at least until 1878. It has been reported that after Benjamin Naylor's death his telescope was purchased by Sir George Airey who may have been the observer of Venus.

Thornfield and Northwold

A major house in Delamer Road area came into the news in the early 1860s. The site of over 1.5 acres at the corner of St. John's Road was sold as early as 1856 to one E. Williamson, a 'gentleman' of Bowdon. Quite often it appears that this title is used by a man who buys and sells land and buildings. Certainly there is no record of Mr. Williamson living at this address, or indeed of anyone else there before 1864. However, it seems that a pair of large semi-detached houses were built there for letting out between 1856 and 1864, i.e. Holly Bank (in St. John's Road) and Thornfield. John Mills who took possession of *Thornfield*, in the latter year, referred to the highly rented house as a 'sentry box'. He had been living until then in a more spacious house at Nantwich.

This new arrival in 'Bowdon', as he called it, is one of the most interesting people we shall meet during this history of 19th century Dunham Massey. We know a good deal about him from his wife's biography written after his death. To say that he was a man of many parts is to over-simplify and do less than justice to a remarkable character. He was born in cotton land, at Ashton-under-Lyne in 1821, but not into the industry. After attending a local private academy until he was 16 he went directly to the local bank. He remained in banking throughout his career, which culminated in his founding of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank in 1872 and its successful development and operation. Several Dunham Massey names were among the original Board members, including William Melland and Joseph Fildes. Joseph Lee became a director in 1880.

This may seem a somewhat prosaic if very successful career, but John Mills was, in fact, a poet of considerable facility, publishing his own volume of verse. He was an able musician who composed music and sang regularly as a baritone apart from being for many years honorary organist until 1883 at Bowdon Downs Congregational Church where in 1868 a new organ was installed of John Mills "own scheming", to use his wife's words. He was a statistician and economist of some eminence, and succeeded Professor Jevons as President of the Manchester Statistical Society. An ardent apostle of free trade, he supported the Liberals politically. What is quite astonishing is that John Mills, after leaving school at 16, was able and resolute enough to educate himself to so advanced a stage that he could hold his own with the best in so many fields.

Mills himself acknowledged with sincerity, in letters quoted in his widow's book, that welcoming intellectual and artistic atmosphere of 'Bowdon' which, as he put it, provided the scope for expansion and compensation for the narrowness of his 'sentry box'. He referred particularly to three 'circles' – literary, musical and economic – scientific. For literature he paid tribute especially to Alexander

Ireland, newspaper publisher, who in the 1860s lived in Stamford Road, Bowdon and who founded the Roundabout Literary Club of which John Mills was an eager member. The club has been interestingly described by Marjorie Cox in *Bowdon Sheaf* No. 14.

For music, the area benefited from the existence of the Hallé Orchestra at whose concerts the Mills were regular attenders. Some members of Charles Hallé's staff lived in Bowdon and participated in the music circle of which Mrs. Louis Behrens was a leading member. John Mills often sang duets



John Mills

with a soprano named Miss Sallie Leese, presumably the daughter of Joseph Leese who lived at Glenfield. Joseph himself was a member of the Roundabout Club and, as we have already recorded, was a leading Congregationalist, prominent in industrial and civic life in Stockport.

One of the most important local families bore the well-known name of Armitage, partners in Armitage and Rigby later to become Armitage & Ward. In 1853 William Armitage had bought Mount Pleasant in the north-west of Altrincham, later to be called Townfield (where Townfield Gardens apartments now stand) with 6 acres of ground. The house was described as an Italianate villa – not the only one in the area! Another member of the Armitage family, Ziba, is recorded by Peter Kemp as living in 1864 at No. 6 Higher Downs.

Like the Leeses, the Armitages were leading members of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church and close associates of the Mills family. William Armitage was the first chairman of the Lancashire and Yorkshire bank and his third son, also William, married Margaret, the Mills' second daughter. Other names we have already encountered who were important members of the Bowdon Downs Church were the Mellands and Milnes of St. Margaret's Road, together with the Crossleys who succeeded the Leeses at Glenfield (of whom more later).

Of the pastors at the church, John Mills paid particular tribute for his teaching and guidance to the Reverend Alexander Mackennal, who took over in 1875, and who lived at Highfield, St. Margaret's Road.

It appears that it was in 1869 that Mr. and Mrs. Mills decided it was time to move to a more spacious house. Isabel Mills recalled – very romantically – how they came to choose the site. A favourite walk took them "past St. Margaret's Church through the park to Dunham Town, returning by the underside of the hill where a narrow path led to a ridge overlooking the valley. Along this ridge was a sunken fence – our frequent resting place." She went on to describe the wonderful view to the north as they sat between a forest sycamore and an ancient spreading ash – a view very similar to that from St. Margaret's church. On this spot they built Northwold, their new home, which Isabel planned with an architect, John's contribution being limited to insisting on a library and room for his organ, on planning the garden and on the retention of the ash and the sycamore.

According to Isabel's account, written some thirty years later, the house was finished and occupied in 1870 but her memory may have been faulty since it seems from other evidence that it was a year or two later. Curiously, the conveyance for the land is dated 1873, but it does seem that in some cases the formal documentation followed the event. The original site, on the east side of what is now Dorset Road, still not made up properly, extended to about an acre and a fifth but soon afterwards nearly as much extra adjoining land down the hill from the ridge was acquired probably to ensure no one else built to spoil the view, although the conveyance did provide for an increase in the chief rent if a house was erected.



Northwold

In fact, as with other places close by, the purchase of extra land to the north of a house with a wonderful view effectively prevented further development for a long period. Only three modern houses now occupy the Mills' extra land and it is clear that it was kept open until recent decades. The second conveyance provides for a 40 foot strip of land along the northern edge to be made available for a projected new road. This road has never been built but there remains an ancient path running behind houses on Malvern Drive which is a convenient route for walking from Oldfield Brow estate through to Dunham Road and into Altrincham. One branch of this path goes round to the west to join Oldfield Road leading to Oldfield Lane and to Dunham Town; in 1870 there was only the Lane as the Road went over the Seamons Road bridge over the Bridgewater Canal where the road of that name now goes. This was undoubtedly the route which the Mills took on their return walk and which led them to their chosen spot for their house.

Northwold has been cleaned and smartened up for use as a nursing home. It was a regular feature of these large Victorian houses to have cellars extending over the whole floor area and, as in other cases, the *Northwold* basement has been excavated and pressed into everyday use. But the house is still recognisably

the same as in the picture in Isabel Mills' book – a dignified fairly plain building with some columns and a little other decoration. A distinctive feature is the placing of large bay windows at the corners of a basically square shape. It is a very substantial house and has not been extended like others for use as a nursing home except to make use of the basement. The 1881 Census shows that John and Isabel Mills could make good use of the considerable space with their six children, a grandchild and five servants. John must be happy to know that there is still an ancient sycamore and some mountain ashes by the spot where he and Isabel rested.

St. Margaret's Road

They were not the only 'Bowdon' people to plan a move to grander accommodation during the late 1860s. In a letter in 1868, John Mills noted that Alexander

Ireland was about to build a house. By 1869 he had bought some 1.5 acres on the west side of St. Margaret's Road, one of the five major plots dividing up that land, four of which were sold by the Earl in the late 1860s, all of them, curiously enough, to people who already lived locally. In 1872 Ireland acquired a further strip of land 16 yards wide to the south of his original plot which may have originally been intended as an entry way or road into the Devisdale. The conveyances indicate that there was also an intention to build a new road to the rear of *Inglewood* as Ireland called his house, and other properties along the street. Eventually Groby Road was extended to the rear of Ing-



Alexander Ireland



Inglewood

lewood, but the intended road to the south of it was apparently not pushed through to join up with The Firs. Curiously, though, one can still today see evidence of a narrow entry on St. Margaret's Road between Inglewood and Haigh Lawn having been closed.

We have already discussed Alexander Ireland to some extent, but it also has to be mentioned that he was the father of John Ireland, composer, who was one year old at the time of the 1871 Census. His house, Inglewood, is a striking building with a high-pitched roof above the attics on the second floor, in something of a faintly Gothic style. One has to acknowledge it as a building appropriate for a leading intellectual and literary figure.

In the article already mentioned, Marjorie Cox describes him as the 'centre' of the stimulating Roundabout Club who was "exceptionally well read (he was said to have a library of 15,000 to 20,000 books) and influential. He was a friend of Carlyle and acquainted with Wordsworth, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey and Mrs. Gaskell as well as American writers." As we have noted, one member of the club was Mr. Joseph Leese of Glenfield.

There is a reference to Inglewood in a book written much later by Kathleen Chorley called *'Manchester Made Them'* about her girlhood in the early 20th cen-



Arthur Ransome

tury at a house in Alderley Edge. She often visited her aunt at Inglewood and she recalls that from the Edge it was possible on a clear day to see the church at 'Bowdon' – perhaps it was the spire of St. Margaret's which was visible!

The first house along this same side of the road, coming from the Higher Downs area, has sadly disappeared since, as we have mentioned, it bore the impressive name of *Devisdale* House still visibly carved into the gateway pillar. The site, a little smaller than the others, was bought in 1868, with an extension in 1872, by Dr. Arthur Ransome of Peel Terrace on the Higher Downs, an account of whom has been given by Peter Kemp who describes him as 'a brilliant man in public health, hygiene and

sanitation'. He was clearly a quite eminent medical man who worked for all three local hospitals. He became chairman of the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association and contributed several papers to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. He is understood to have been uncle to the Arthur Ransome who wrote *'Swallows and Amazons'*.

The house in between Devisdale House and Inglenook represents something of a mystery. A draft conveyance of 1868 indicates that the original site of nearly an acre was sold to James Mudd, photographer, of Richmond Hill, Bowdon. He was a most interesting photography pioneer (in close association with Joseph Sidbotham) an account of whom is given in an article by Jenny Wetton in *Bowdon Sheaf* No.14 mentioned above. He does not appear to have moved from Richmond Hill and it may be that he changed his mind or that he bought the land as an investment. No occupier is shown in the 1871 Census, but a 1878 Directory shows George Hodgkinson at *Haigh Lawn*, the name which remains today. In the 1881 Census he is described as a cotton manufacturer, accompanied by his wife, a sister, three children and three servants. In a 1888 Directory, Catherine Hodgkinson is shown to be the occupier.



Haigh Lawn

Haigh Lawn is not dissimilar to Inglewood with some white bricks but appearing even taller with its lower pitched roof over three floors. Like the smaller houses opposite it makes attractive use of groups of two or three narrow windows with semi-circular arches at the top – of which Inglenook has a lesser number.

The fourth house going along the road towards the church strictly belongs to the early 1870s but it is convenient to mention it at this stage. This is particularly so because in general style and scale it bears comparison with the two great houses we have considered. Its windows, however, are all rectangular and it has a little black and white decoration. It has always been known as *Westwood*. In 1872 the site was conveyed to Asakel Pilkington Bell, a Manchester architect, but there is no evidence that he occupied the house. By 1878 it was certainly occupied by Henry Atkinson, attorney and solicitor who in 1881 was still there with his wife, three children and five servants. The Atkinson family later became prominent members of St. Margaret's Church and of the legal profession, with Sir Cyril Atkinson a judge.

Finally, on this western side and nearest to the church, across what is now Groby Road, is the stately, well proportioned and attractive mansion of *Hill Carr* which was built for William Melland of Racefield (now Holmeside) who bought



Hill Carr

the site of well over 2 acres in 1867. Curiously, the conveyance in this case called for stock (red) brick and not white ones, with stone settings on all sides. We can now enjoy the sight of this house more readily since the entrance in Groby Road has been opened up for the building of a few new houses on the edge of the great lawn.

There is a considerable mystery about Mr. Melland, however. He does not appear in the 1871 Census at Hill Carr (which was recorded as being under repair!) or at Racefield or anywhere else. He was quite prominent in the Congregational Church – in 1864, for instance, he was one of the six men who signed a letter accepting the resignation of a sick Minister – and as an industrialist. He was only 50 in 1870 and had a much younger wife and five children, probably of two marriages. The three older ones, aged 11, 10 and 7 in 1871 were all born in Manchester as was the young wife; Melland himself came from Derbyshire. A director of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank from its foundation in 1872 he became Vice Chairman and then Chairman from 1892 to 1904 when he died at the age of 84. He may have moved to Victoria Park, Rusholme, also a favoured area for Manchester men to live in. As far as our story of Dunham Massey is concerned he has disappeared rather early.

There is, of course, one further large expanse of ground between Hill Carr and the Dunham Road, but this was left as an open space, as we have noted. We have also observed that the other vacant site across the road from Hill Carr and south



William Melland

also observed that the other vacant site across the road from Hill Carr and south of Mr. Fildes' house at Beech Lawn was acquired by him in 1868. A sign on the front of the rather formidable looking mansion, which was a hint of a mini-castle about it, indicated that *Limehurst* was built in 1870. No entry appears in the 1871 Census but by 1878 it was occupied by Richard Curtis a 'machine-maker' with his wife, four children and three servants, and they were still there in 1888.

As we have also noted earlier, the site south of Limehurst across Groby Road was occupied from 1866 by a house originally known as Oak Hill, later becoming the new Racefield. John Arkwright, a

general practitioner from Accrington, lived there in 1871 with his wife, three children and four servants. It seems clear that doctors were handsomely rewarded by their well-to-do patients.

Groby Road

There was other activity in this area as well in the late 1860s. Next to Limehurst along the eastern section of Groby road are two double houses which today are called *Longford Lodge/Home Hill* and *Green Oaks/Southside*. In the same year 1868 we find Joseph Gaskarth, wine merchant of Altrincham and enthusiastic purchaser of land, whom we shall come across more than once later in this history, acquiring nearly two-thirds of an acre on which a house was erected which by 1871 was occupied by John Barker, Member of the Manchester Stock Exchange. Since the name Longford Lodge does not appear then or later in our period, it is possible that Mr. Barker's house, known as Home Hill, comprised the whole building.

Also in 1868 or thereabouts, some people called Bellhouse bought the next site going east where Green Oaks/Southside were built. They seem to have divided



Limehurst

the pair of houses amongst the family since in 1878 a Mrs. Bellhouse and a Mr. Bellhouse are shown separately as living in Groby Road. In 1881 Isabella Bellhouse, a widow with 'industrial means', was recorded in the same road with her daughter and three servants, but Mr. Bellhouse is missing. By 1888, however, Ernest Bellhouse is at Southside and Miss Emma Bellhouse at Green Oaks, so we have to presume that the widow had died.

Dunham Road

To complete this block of property bounded by Dunham, St. Margaret's and Groby Roads there is *Racehill* next to Beech Lawn on the main road. This site of almost an acre was bought in the same busy year of 1868 by Ernest Bates, an architect of Cooper Street, Manchester. We have to guess that this is another case of an architect building a house as an investment, since there is no record of Mr. Bates having lived in the property. In fact, nobody is recorded there in the 1871 Census but by 1881 we find Mr. James Seddon, a solicitor, his wife, daughter and two servants and the same family is there in 1888.

Despite its architectural design, *Racehill*, as well as the houses in Groby Road behind it, are fairly plain and undistinguished structures in white brick. All of

them are somewhat hemmed in by trees and bushes today and perhaps would seem more impressive if they were in clearer settings. Certainly, however, Race-hill could hardly have presented a striking appearance to Dunham Road. It would seem that seclusion was becoming more important than display.

There were other major developments further west along the Dunham road in this period. From the point opposite Dunham Mount where the open memorial ground is now bounded by Devisdale Road, there are five significant buildings – *Chomlea* and *West Lynn*, both the centre of major additions of modern apartment blocks and now having their entrances on Devisdale Road, plus *Oakleigh*, *Chaseley* and *Parkdale*, the first two of which are attractive unspoilt private houses and the third is occupied by the Vegetarian Society. In all cases the original houses were set well back from the main road and all are difficult to observe but have considerable attractions. They all, moreover, seem to have been built in the late 1860s or soon after but the facts are not very clear in all cases, partly because some house names have changed.

Chomlea, the name of the first house going west, never appears in the 19th century records, nor it is possible to trace an entry in the Census returns of anyone who undoubtedly lived there. However, the site was conveyed in 1872 to Henry Kenyon, plumber and glazier. In directories of 1878 and 1888 there are references to John Lees Barker of Dunham Road whom it is difficult to place anywhere else. There may have been a particular problem with this site because it is sharply bounded on the south-east by the new Devisdale Road which was probably intended originally to go right through to Bowdon. Currently, in the summer of 1990, a large part of the house is shrouded in creepers and the house itself is hemmed in by new apartments. One hopes that it is not the intention for it to be taken down or to fall down.

The 2 acre site of West Lynn next to the west at the sharp bend in the Dunham Road was bought in 1868 also by Henry Kenyon, obviously a kind of speculative builder, who had been married in 1851 in Bowdon Downs church – another Congregationalist entrepreneur! The conveyance provides for one or two houses in white brick. The first occupier was an Anglican in the person of Bulkeley Allen who is shown in 1871 as living there with his wife, three children and four servants, remaining until at least 1888. In 1886 we find him writing to the Vicar of St. Margaret's on the question of securing advice about the dangers to the church tower from the resumption of bell ringing.

His house was somewhat unusual. It has been sand-blasted clean by the developers, leaving the bricks yellowish rather than white with a little decoration using red bricks. The general quite massive shape is uneven, higgledy-piggledy even, including a kind of tower block at one end, which may have been a later addition and a considerable mixture of window shapes. Chomlea next door has certain similarities, but is not easy to view because of its partial coverage of greenery.



Oakleigh

The next house along the road is Oakleigh, of a much warmer looking and traditional country house appearance in reddish brick. The land comprising a little over an acre was bought in 1867 by Joseph Compton, calico printer of Mosley Street, Manchester. He undertook to build one house of annual value not less than £150 p.a. using stock, good seconds or white bricks with stone dressings. He fortunately seems to have preferred the red stock bricks and kept the dressings to an invisible minimum. It is a really attractive house from the front drive, appearing to be of modest size but probably with hidden depths. A curiosity of the conveyance is that it provides, like many others, for a new road at the rear or south-east, which has never been made, which would have been parallel to the main Dunham Road.

Next comes the house now known as Chaseley but which appears on an 1882 map as Oakville. It may indeed have been called Park Side before that. The house was occupied by 1871 by William Benson Clegg, merchant and manufacturer with his wife, five children and four servants. By 1881 the number of children had been doubled but there was only one more servant, living-in at any rate. The house is very extensive in light brick with some red decorations, another traditional country house-style but on a grander, less homely scale than Oakleigh.



Chaseley (originally Oakville)

Finally, along this long stretch of the main road is a house called, to make it all very confusing, Parkdale. The site of originally no more than 1.33 acres was acquired in the late 1850s by John Shaw, landscape gardener and nurseryman of Princess Street, Manchester, but it is not clear when the house was built since Mr. Shaw does not appear in any records as living there and by 1888 the property was occupied by Mr. Clibran, a name familiar to many Hale people who recall the extensive nursery on Bankhall Lane. For behind Parkdale there was the large Stamford Nursery at least in 1882 and 1911.

Parkdale house is not at all attractive from the front, partly because of its rambling L-shape, but it presents its two wide garden sides to the great lawn at the rear, a quite impressive sight. Its red bricks, squarish windows and back and white decoration under the gables give it the appearance of being of rather later construction than the 1860s. It must have been difficult to maintain and is quite inconveniently situated to be used as apartments, so the Vegetarian Society have it with some fears about its future. In 1882 and 1911 there was another property along the road called The Cottage but only a tiny kind of lodge remains today.



Parkdale

Oldfield

The last area of development in the late 1860s was a group of four properties just to the north-west of the church around what are now Suffolk and Highgate Roads. We have already mentioned *Morningside* north of Oldfield Bank where Catherine Kerr, a widow living on interest, resided in 1871, despite Richard Massey's intention of keeping the land open. The other three, *Ellerslie*, *Holmacre* and *Northlea* all front on to Suffolk Road in plots of around one acre each.

Ellerslie was taken by Robert Hinde a merchant of Fountain Street, Manchester, who was in residence by 1871 with his wife, seven children and three servants. *Holmeacre* was acquired by F. Charles Ede another Manchester merchant but there is no trace of him or anyone living at a house of that name until Charles behrens in 1888, although there are some unplaced names in the 1881 Census. The site of *Northlea* was bought in 1868 by Edward Collins, corn merchant of Manchester, and by 1881 he is recorded as living on dividends with his wife, daughter and three servants.

These three houses are all very attractive. *Holmeacre* and *Ellerslie* are basically square in shape with a substantial extra piece on the former which dazzles with a pattern of pale yellow and pink bricks – it is the only house in the area on



Ellerslie

the 1990 'List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest'. Ellerslie is in plainer yellow brick but it also pleasant in its proportions and setting. Northlea is quite different in dark brick and lower slate roof with its coach house across the yard from the front door, and is welcoming in appearance, notwithstanding the untidiness of its design.

Conclusions

So in a great burst of activity in the late 1860s some 20 or more houses were added to the 25 of the 1850s in or close to the township of Dunham Massey, and on the whole this second decade's increment consisted of more substantial properties than its predecessor's. The new owners must be counted as being near-rich, presumably most of them owning their own coaches and horses. Certainly they lived a fair way from the railway and one does not know to what extent they used their coaches to travel to Bowdon station rather than to take them all the way to Manchester. A significant number of them must be presumed to have commuted one way or another.

We must not forget that in this same decade of the 1860s four or five of the great mansions of the period were built in Green Walk, Bowdon, such as Hilston



Holmeacre

House, Gorsefield (later Bickham House after the owner) Oakley and Brunswick House. This area is beyond the scope of this present history but it is interesting to note where the most wealthy of the settlers in Bowdon/Dunham Massey chose to place their great houses. Certainly they conformed to the pattern of the more wealthy choosing to live in the places more distant from Altrincham.

By 1870 then we have reached a stage when the target of 50 new houses adumbrated in our 1850 map has nearly been met. One wonders whether the planners had expected it to take 20 years or more – a long time for building a congregation! It is also very doubtful whether they foresaw that the result of the building of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church in 1848, just a few years before the decision was taken to build the great new Anglican church, would foster the development of a nonconformist community comprising a substantial proportion of the new settlers who had been expected to become the supporters of St. Margaret.

Certainly the original pattern of a quite neat cross of houses, centred on the new church, had been substantially modified. It is true that St. Margaret's Road had been successfully developed as the main stem of the cross, including the north east sector excluded from the plan, plus a short extension into Groby Road together with the planned loop at the foot round Woodville and Bowdon Roads. But the long limb to the east along the road to Altrincham had been fore-



Northlea

shortened even though two houses on the south side had been added. It was strange that the church planners had included no houses just opposite the church but they appear to have considered the whole area down to Woodville Road to be out of bounds, perhaps because of land ownership problems – the 1838 Tithe map shows this land to be leased, presumably to a farmer.

Perhaps the most serious failure was to organise the building of a large number of houses directly along the top length of the cross immediately to the north of the church. Possibly this area was too far down the hill and too inconvenient. In any event, it was progressively replaced by the Highgate/Suffolk/Dorset Roads area to the west.

Where events were particularly consistent with the plan was in Dunham New Park which was clearly still in the category of forbidden territory. The major change in the 1870s was the breaking of this embargo plus a little further encroachment on the north-eastern sector of the Devisdale. The Park development would further distort the pattern of the original cross which had already gone somewhat askew.

THE 1870S AND EARLY 1880S – INTO THE PARK

The development in the late 1860s in the Suffolk and Dorset Roads area could possibly be regarded as nibbling into Dunham New Park. Certainly this was formerly open land bordering on the Park but was not part of the wooded area which came right up to the Dunham Road. It has to be remembered that neither Suffolk and Dorset Roads nor Bradgate Road existed whilst Bonville was probably little more than a track. However, as the years passed, the encroachment on the Park area became more extensive and less ambiguous.

Until 1870 or thereabouts the most westerly house was Northwold on Dorset Road, John Mills' house, which we have discussed earlier and which backed on to Robert Hinde's Ellerslie on Suffolk Road. In 1870 also James Lamb, an upholster, bought nearly two acres across Dorset Road to build *Kenwood* (later known as *Fairhope*). In the 1881 Census Lamb, living there with his wife, three daughters and five servants, was recorded as the employer of 122 people. It seems clear that he was a major Manchester maker of Gothic domestic furniture with a warehouse in John Dalton Street. The house is one of many towards and inside the Park area which have disappeared.

Within a couple of years another large site lying along Bradgate Road and the sides of Northwold and Ellerslie, with its frontage on Suffolk Road, was bought by James Gaskarth, wine merchant, mentioned in the last chapter. This time he was concerned with the building of a house for his family and himself. He called it Parklea, but today, after refurbishment and conversion into apartments and an extension, it bears the name *White House* and the dates 1873 and 1989. Clearly it was a substantial property in its original condition, a quite solid but dignified building in white brick and little decoration. James Gaskarth was still living there in 1888. Prominent in local government (he became mayor of the borough of Altrincham in 1870-71, 1879 and 1886), he seems to have been a local man, because Isaac Gaskarth, presumably his father, was mayor in 1838 and 1840.

In the same period of the early 1870s, Joseph Gaskarth, wine merchant, bachelor and mayor of Altrincham, was buying other land from the Earl of Stamford. There was, for instance, an acre of land completing the Suffolk Road mini-complex on which a curious house called *Holmrook* was built which in 1990 has also been converted into four apartments and substantially extended to provide seven more. There was also a more extensive area between Groby and Bentinck Roads on which *Earlsleigh* was built (fronting on Groby Road next to the new Racefield) with associated cottages at the rear. In 1878 and 1881, Earlsleigh was occu-

pied by George Stanley Wood, cotton spinner, with his wife, four children and four servants. It is still there, an extensive, rather plain, white brick building with an elaborate glass sided portico which may well be a recent adornment. Mr. Wood was another prominent Congregationalist.

The building of Earlsleigh completed the development of Dunham Massey township up to its eastern boundary which ran from Groby Road, near the corner of Racefield Road, across to Bentinck Road, and along Woodville to the first part of St. John's, encompassing Thornfield and Holly Bank and the whole of Delamer Road before turning along the middle of Cavendish Road and across the Devisdale. In the extreme north-east, on Grey Road, a large pile called Northlands, now with a separate half named Aucklands, appeared by the 1880s. It was occupied in 1886 by a Mrs. Catherine Welsh and also by Mr. Richard J. Kerr who may have been related to Mrs. Catherine Kerr, the widow at Morningside not far away.

Across what is now Harrington Road from Morningside is a house now called Five-Ways with walls much decorated in black and white. Late in 1878 the site of about 0.5 acre was conveyed to Mr. F. Venables Williams, a calico printer of Bowdon, who is shown in the 1881 Census as living at a house called Braeside



Five-Ways (originally Braeside)



Hurstdale

with his wife, five children and three servants. Next door to Five-Ways (Braeside) is another major house called Harrington which is somewhat similar in appearance, although not built until 1890.

We are now left with the extension of the incursion of the great houses into the open land to the west and the south-west all involving the building of new roads, i.e. the extension of Bradgate and Bonville Roads in the Dunham New Park area and the construction of Devisdale Road to meet with the extension of Groby Road and Devisdale itself. An interesting point on which we have touched already is that there seems to have been clear intentions of extending these new road systems still further, but the plans were not completed. Just possibly the mid-Victorian boom of Dunham Massey mansions was brought to an end slightly prematurely by new developments elsewhere. However, one has to recognise that, given the great size of most of the later mansions and of the areas allotted to them, there was little room left for further development without major invasions of the open space.

If we take the Devisdale area first, we find that by 1881 four major houses had been built which completed the development as it stands today apart from one later addition, i.e. Dunham Knoll at the extreme south of Devisdale Road, an-

other black and white decorated house which looks rather Edwardian and was built around 1895. The four houses which belong to our period of study are Hurstdale and Silverlands on the west side of Devisdale Road, plus The Sycamores and Earlscliffe on the east. Both Silverlands and Earlscliffe have been replaced by modern buildings and the other two appear to be occupied as apartments.

The site of Hurstdale, well over two acres, was bought in 1874 by Henry Dickinson, a merchant, of Heald Road, Bowdon. Unusually, the conveyance allowed him four years to build one house on this land. Mr. Dickinson did not stay long, since in 1881 the house was occupied by John Mitchell, a 'foreign and home merchant', with four children, two visitors and six servants. It is a massive edifice on three floors, of somewhat undistinguished design incorporating much detailed interweaving of red and white bricks in odd patterns bordering on gaudy. Its front door is small and unimpressive.

Silverlands, along the road to the south, was another matter. It has since been replaced by a single residence behind high fences, but a drawing of it survives in the *British Architect and Northern Engineer*, 1877 edition, which portrays a quite



Silverlands

well-proportioned structure on two floors topped by a tower above the entrance portico which is reached by a sweeping drive and faces north towards the large garden in its total site of two acres. The carved and decorated windows indicate some Italian leanings on the part of the architects Horton and Bridgford of Manchester. In 1881 this attractive house was occupied by John James Eccleston, a small ware silk manufacturer, with his wife, two children and four servants.

The fact that The Sycamores is today hemmed-in by trees and shrubs perhaps indicates a certain absence of pride in its appearance which is understandable from what little is visible. It certainly appears to be lacking in both distinction and harmony in its whitish brick cladding. The fact that its original occupant was an iron merchant, William Archer junior, is perhaps as surprising as the fact that he shared this rambling building in 1881, built in a plot of some two acres, with just his wife, a visitor and one servant. It was certainly unusual.

Earlscliffe, the last of this group of four houses, is the only one for which we have neither presence nor picture, but only some new apartment blocks and an old lodge surprisingly situated at the rear of the property away from the road but with a long drive-way from Groby Road. This lodge is large enough to be a comfortable family house and its fairly simple three-gabled frontage in whitish brick betokens a lost mansion of at least modest distinction but leaves a fair amount to the imagination. Nor does the occupancy of the house in 1881 offer us much information since the Census records only that Jane Shires who lived there was a widow with five children and four servants.

Before we leave the Devisdale area, however, we must mention one of the greatest mansions of all. If one stands in the middle of the open space and faces north, the back and white of Dunham Knoll can be clearly seen, picturesquely, to the right, whilst to the left the top of *Denzell House* appears above the trees. Much has already been written about this property, notably by Valerie Trenbath (*Bowdon Sheaf*, Nos.7 and 8) and Marjorie Cox (*Bowdon Sheaf*, No.8). The building, set in ten acres of ground, is a curious mixture of styles. Nicholas Pevsner dismissively described it "as a luscious villa in which debased Jacobean had been mixed with Italianate details to produce a bad composition". Valerie Trenbath prefers a less damning opinion, saying that "the design of the building was inspired by the Early Flemish Renaissance with allowance for Victorian crudity". The Manchester architects Clegg and Knowles were presumably typical of the mixed-up state of architecture in the city at the time.

Denzell is included in our story of Dunham Massey by the accident that the boundary of the township embraces it (but not its massive neighbours across Green Walk, Bowdon, a road made around 1760 for coaches going from Dunham Massey Hall to Bowdon Church). Five of these mansions have survived and it is interesting to note the considerable differences among their design styles, none of which resembles Denzell House. The only one built by 1860 – Gorsefield, or Bickham House as it was later named after its owners – is of traditional English style with only modest decoration. Of the three constructed during the 1860s Oakley has a distinct similarity to Bickham House. The other two, Hilston House and



Denzell House

Bowdon Croft, the first now a nursing home and the second a private hotel, with their basically horizontal roof lines, clearly demonstrate the enduring strength of the classical revival. Significantly, the latest of the five, Erlesdene, built around 1874, and therefore a close contemporary of Denzell, has a massive tower and other extravagant decoration without the true features of arch and gable which the Gothic revival sought to restore. The Trafford 'List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' includes only Hilston House and Erlesdene, calling the style of the former 'Free Italianate' and of the latter Victorian Gothic/Elizabethan.

The man for whom Denzell House was built was Robert Scott, shown in the 1881 Census as a 'spinning manufacturer'. As Marjorie Cox says in her paper, not much is known about him, but he was the son of a farmer in Cumberland who presumably came to Manchester to make his fortune. This he certainly achieved since Denzell probably cost in total something like £2 millions in 1990 money. A curious feature of the 1874 conveyance of the land from the Earl is that it includes a capital payment of £7,075 (perhaps a quarter of a million pounds today) in addition to a lease charge of £20 per annum. This practice of requiring a capital payment seems to have grown during the 1870s. A number of examples indicate a pattern of the initial payment amounting to about 20 times the reduction



Bowdon Croft (Bowdon)

rent. Yet in a number of contemporary instances the payments are entirely by way of rent.

As Marjorie Cox reports, Robert Scott, at the time of his marriage in 1845 at Saint Luke's, Cheetham Hill, Manchester, was a salesman. However, he is understood to have been connected with the great textile firm of Tootal Broadhurst Lee (of which more later) and he is presumably the same Robert Scott who joined the partnership in 1859 as 'cashier' which must have meant something more like Chief Accountant or Finance Director. If so, he is one of the early examples of a career manager who made his way very successfully in textiles without being either one of a textile family or a self-made mill owner himself. The 1881 Census demonstrates the style in which he lived at Denzell. To quote Marjorie Cox again – "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."

Leaving the Devisdale area with its housing fringe completed, at least within Dunham Massey, we come finally to the great houses which really made serious inroads into the edges of Dunham New Park. A total of 11 are involved and in approximate order of construction they are:



Erlesdene (Bowdon)

Date	Name	Position	Original Occupier
1873	Woodleigh	End of Bradgate Road on right	Charles Hinde (Solicitor)
1874	Dunham Lawn	Beginning of Bradgate Road	Albert Jordan (Commission Merchant)
1876	Park Side	Corner of Bradgate and Bonville	Robert Johnson
1877	Oldfield Brow	Left-hand side of Bradgate beyond Bonville	Neville Clegg (Calico Printer)
1877	Woodlands	Southern end of Bonville – west	J. McKenna (Wine & Spirit Merchant)
1878	Woodend	Beyond end of Bradgate – left	Richard Ogle (Iron Merchant)
1879	Overdale	Bonville Road opposite ParkSide	John Grafton (Calico Printer)
1882	Newstead	Bonville Road	Charles Cummins
1883	Annandale	Bradgate Road	Fred Travers
1884	Longcroft	Bradgate Road	William Samuel
1889	Normanby	Bonville Road	Mainpiece

Of the above houses, only Woodleigh and Annandale remain, the latter now standing empty after being used as a nursing home. Fortunately we have pictures of Woodlands and Woodend from the *British Architect*. All the houses occupied large sites of around two acres or more. The original owners of Woodleigh, Woodlands, Oldfield Brow and Woodend added to their initial land purchases in succeeding years.

Architecturally, the houses which remain, or of which we have pictures, are a very mixed bag. Woodlands bore a significant similarity to Erlesdene, its near-contemporary, the most extravagant of the piles on Green Walk. Allandale is a fair monstrosity in black and white with red brick, although its present dilapidated state does not do it justice – in its day it may well have been a moderately



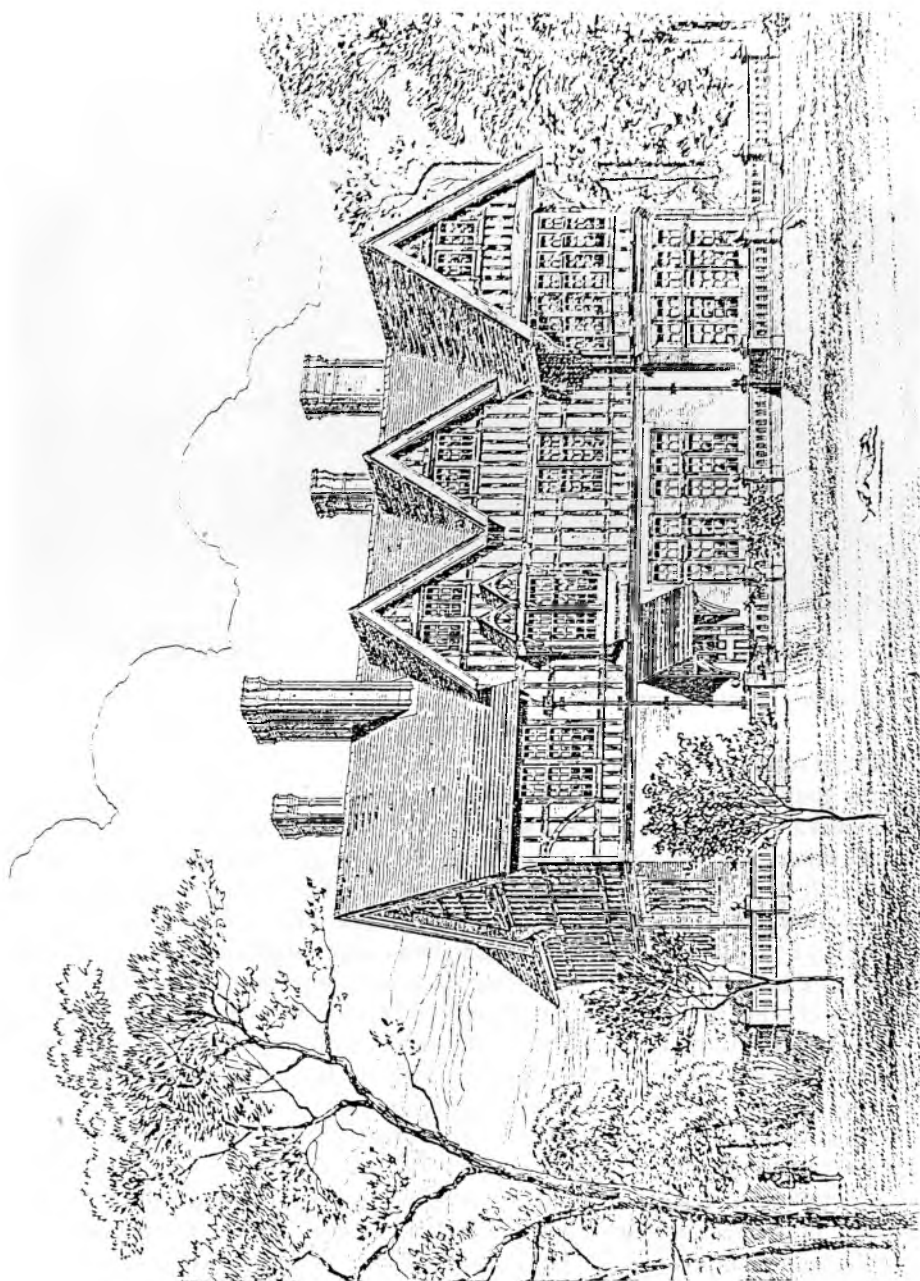
Woodlands



Annandale

appealing if not very significant structure. Woodend, on the other hand, appears to have been a stately and dignified throw-back to the Elizabethan period with its tiny window panes. Of course, the picture of Woodend is not coloured but the accompanying text tells us that the materials used were red stock bricks with Yorkshire stoneheads, sills and mullions. The upper storeys were constructed on timber framing, cemented between, and the roof covered in red tiles. The internal finishings, including the chimney pieces, were in oak. The upper squares of reception room windows were filled in with richly-stained glass. The house undoubtedly was an attractive and well proportioned residence. It was certainly a large place with extensive attics. Perhaps it did not contribute much to the advancement of architectural design, but no doubt many people would consider it more civilised than some of the Victorian Gothic around. Perhaps it was a reaction!

Richard Ogle at Woodend was undoubtedly well-to-do; living with only his wife and a daughter, he had seven servants. The ground floor of the house had a massive kitchen and a scullery almost as big as well as a butler's pantry, a cook's pantry, store and a china closet to provide service to the great drawing room, dining-room, library and the hall which was shielded from the entrance lobby. Woodlands was similarly ordered since John McKenna had six servants for his family of wife and two children. Somewhat unexpectedly, the house had a large



Woodend



Woodleigh – rear view with lodge.

breakfast room instead of a library or billiards room. There were eight bedrooms on the first floor and two attic rooms. As befitted the business of the owner, there was a beer cellar as well as a wine cellar – and a basement larder.

The other house which remains standing, Woodleigh, is one of the those which is difficult to see properly because of surrounding trees, but it is clearly a white brick building with quite high gables and a square castellated tower block which is topped by a small round turret. It seems to be a rather rambling affair which could look more attractive in a better setting. In general appearance it is similar to a number of other houses in the neighbourhood but its peculiar structure makes it seem almost a folly. Charles Hinde, the owner, was presumably a relation of Robert Hinde at Ellerslie. Also Neville Clegg at Oldfield Brow was the son of Benson Clegg at Parkside (Chaseley) on the Dunham Road.

It is at first sight curious that such a high proportion of these mansions in the Park area should have disappeared. On reflection the reason is probably their considerable size and relative inconvenience of interior and of position. Once it became impossible to maintain the large force of servants and to cope with the problems of maintenance, the charms of seclusion became the disadvantages of isolation. Even as nursing homes – which both Woodend and Annandale were – these houses were presumably not economic propositions. Woodlands is under-

stood to have served as a convent before the end of its days – even with isolation as a merit it was apparently not viable.

It is interesting to note also that in general these larger mansions, like most of those on Green Walk, did not possess the charm or pleasant distinctiveness of design which some of the houses of rather more modest pretensions have lived to display. It is as if, in the end, wealth and ostentation overreached themselves, creating structures which could not even be adapted for use by larger numbers of people or divided satisfactorily, as some are, into separate dwellings of character rather than just apartments. As the great riches from south Lancashire and Manchester reached their peak, their most typical creations were so extravagant that they were not to stand the test of time. Much else did not last long either.

1880'S AND BEYOND – EMINENT MEN OF MASSEY

As we reach the end of the period covered by this review, it is appropriate to mention a few changes of occupants of some of the more important early houses which have not been adequately covered in the text so far. In doing so we shall encounter some particularly eminent men.

Of the late 1850s' development, Beech Bank on Bowdon Road had by 1878 seen Reuben Levi, manufacturing clothier, replaced by John Thompson, India Merchant, with his wife, two sons and four servants. At Grove House on the corner of Woodville Road and St. Margaret's Road, James Watson, calico printer had given way by 1881 to James Stuart, banker, with his wife, seven children and five servants. Next door at Westlind, Francis Milne, cotton spinner employing 200 people and leading Congregationalist, had by 1881 been replaced by James Gould Cooper, merchant, aged 71, with a sister, nephew and two servants. In the other half of the same building called Leahurst Jane Wolff had replaced Elizabeth Marriott in a much smaller household of only one child and two servants instead of five and five.

On the other side of the Dunham Road there had also been changes some of them of considerable significance. At Oldfield Bank, Richard Massey, gentleman and retired slate merchant, had given way to Robert Clay, retired builder with his wife three children and three servants. Many of the foregoing people were no doubt interesting and even outstanding but we have as yet no information to put them in the same category of eminence as the man who around 1870 took over Park Gate, the neighbouring house to Oldfield Bank, and one of the three important houses along from the church on the main road. This newcomer was Joseph Cocksey Lee.

Henry and Joseph Lee were the sons of a muslin manufacturer of Chorley, Henry being the older by 15 years. In harness with Henry Tootal Broadhurst, they were responsible for the emergence of Tootal Broadhurst Lee, one of the great late 19th century textile firms which by 1887 had 5000 workers and was third in size behind Rylands and Horrockses. It was Henry Lee, with his great ability for organising manufacturing operations, who was mainly responsible in the early years for developing this considerable business. At one stage he was made a presentation by his operatives who commended his 'constant presence and vigilance'. His considerable benevolence for them was well known, a manifestation it is said of his nonconformist conscience.

Among the factories established by this company were the Sunnyside Mills at Bolton and the Ten Acres Mill in Manchester where the finest cotton and mixed fabrics were made. Finishing work was done partly at Sunnyside but calico printing was centred on the Rossendale Printing Company at Rawtenstall owned for a period separately by Joseph Lee who was particularly concerned with design and marketing particularly of fancy dress goods. He established a close link between marketing and manufacturing, a vital principle which with advantage would guide more British firms today.

Lee was another man who prospered after leaving school – the Manchester Grammar School in fact. He did, of course, enjoy the great advantage of being able to enter a company which his brother had already set firmly on the road to great success. Nevertheless, he certainly demonstrated the ability to make the

most of a limited education, albeit with the benefit of a good environment. Moreover, he fully understood the vital general importance of education and training, becoming a patron of the movement for improved technical and artistic education. He believed in the great need to improve the quality of the labour force in order to enhance British competitiveness. If this message had been heeded by many more of his contemporaries and successors, we should not need to be preaching to the unconverted in 1990!

The list of important positions held by Joseph Lee (later Sir Joseph) is impressive – President of the Manchester School of Art,



Sir Joseph C. Lee

Chairman of the Whitworth Institute, Vice-president of Manchester Technical School, Chairman of the executive committee of an industrial exhibition and so on. He was a kind of consultant to the Foreign Office and Board of Trade on tariffs. By 1888 he was Chairman of Tootals. In his later years he was a prime mover in the Manchester Ship Canal project and without his financial ability and great energy the canal might not have been constructed. He persuaded Lord Egerton to be the Chairman of the company and was himself Director and deputy Chairman from 1885 to 1894 when overwork probably brought about his premature death at the age of 62.

In his spare time Lee had also managed to serve as a director of John Mills' Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, as a J.P. and even as President of the Altrincham Dramatic Society. He was clearly one of the most distinguished members of the Bowdon Downs Church, having in 1861 married Henrietta, daughter of the Reverend James Hill, President of the Congregational Conference. It is reported that late in his life he moved somewhat away from nonconformist and the old Liberal Party towards Liberal Unionism and the established church.

There was one venture in which the Lees engaged which was not successful, i.e. the establishment of the North-West African Trading Company. The details of this need not concern us here, but it is relevant that the Lees became embarrassingly indebted to Tootals. Nevertheless, on his death, Joseph Lee left some £206,000, perhaps £8-10 millions in 1990 money. But for the losses of the North-West African Company, it could have been much more.

A footnote to this somewhat awesome story of Joseph Lee is that one Robert Scott was also involved in the North-West African Company. He had joined the Tootals partnership in 1859 at the same time as Joseph Lee. There can be little doubt that this was the man who built Denzell in 1874.

We have recounted the career of Sir Joseph Cocksey Lee at some length not just because he was an eminent man of Massey, but also because of the light his story throws on the general scene of south Lancashire and north Cheshire. We can glean some further enlightenment from the life of a very near neighbour of Lee's who arrived around 1877 next door at Glenfield where he succeeded Lee's near namesake Joseph Leese.

This was William Crossley who was born in Ireland in 1844 and educated there until, in 1863, he started a four-year course in engineering at Sir William Elswick's works at Newcastle. At the end of this period he joined his older brother's India rubber machinery business in Great Marlborough Street, Manchester.

This relationship with an elder brother, Francis Crossley, an inventive engineer to whom William owed much, is just one of the striking parallels with the life of Joseph Lee. However, the Crossley brothers had a somewhat harder fight on their hands before they successfully established a large engine business, derived substantially from the purchase of the German patents of the Otto gas engine



Sir William Crossley

which much later developed into Crossley Motors. In 1867 the two young men were living in lodgings in Altrincham. They worked long and hard to develop the business and eventually established the great works at Openshaw which employed 1,800 men.

William Crossley was a considerable philanthropist, one of the earliest of the industrialists to lead the way. On his death in 1911 the *Altrincham Guardian* was able to stress his concern for ameliorating the conditions of the poor and to say that there was no institution in Manchester and district of a charitable or philanthropic character which did not include him among its supporters. He established the Openshaw Boys Club. He was Chairman of the Manchester Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Throat and it was chiefly due to him that the hospital in Dunham Massey which became St. Anne's hospital was founded. It

appears that he paid for both accommodation and equipment. He gave the incredible amount of £70,000 (several millions in today's money) for the building of a sanatorium in Delamere Forest.

His success story is symptomatic of the Victorian period in that the men who were successful made great fortunes whether they were in textiles or other, often related, industries. Success in textiles was not too difficult and thousands achieved it. Engineering was perhaps more difficult and more deserving, but it was certainly well rewarded. Essentially this scope for considerable profitability was based on the newness of the great industrial activities involved and on Britain's early lead of several decades in exploiting the potential of the industries in world markets, but also on the availability of a vast amount of cheap labour. Some industrial leaders understood the situation and realised the future would be more difficult. Crossley, as we shall see, and Lee were among the few enlightened ones.

There is no doubt that there were some remarkable similarities between the

two men and the differences, of religious denomination, for instance, not too important. As Lee was guided by his nonconformist conscience, Crossley was driven by his Anglican belief in God, which led him to practical promotion of his religion. When St. John's church in St. John's Road, the 'Poor People's Church', needed a daughter church but could not find a site, Crossley bought some old cottages in Pownall Street, cleared the land and gave the site for the Mission Church of St. Elizabeth's. Although he was essentially a Liberal in politics, Tories and Liberals alike joined to put him on Cheshire County Council in 1901.

Like Joseph Lee, he was passionately concerned with the promotion of education particularly of a technical character, and was engaged in a council committee for education in Altrincham. In 1903 he was accorded the Freedom of the city of Manchester and in his response to the presentation speeches he drew attention to the great potential benefits of the development of electricity. He argued:

"Surely God never intended men to be huddled together as at present. It seems to me that morality and decent living, like the death-rate, depend on cubic space allotted. A first result of the improved education we are pressing upon the people will be a demand for better housing, more privacy and more air."

He went to quote his own long-held belief that "a city's greatest asset is its young men", and urged the importance of trying to increase their value – "Education will do that quicker than anything else". This last remark was another clear echo of Joseph Lee, although Crossley was more advanced than Lee in his social thinking. It is not surprising that in 1906 William Crossley became Altrincham's first Liberal MP and was created a baronet in 1909. Like Lee again, he was a leading promoter of the Manchester ship Canal and was still a Director on his death in 1911. He left nearly £600,000 or £20-25 million in today's value.

So the great houses around St. Margaret's Church of Dunham Massey were attracting some men who must rank as eminent if not great. Of the two near neighbours whose careers we have summarised so far one was an Anglican, the other a Congregationalist, representative perhaps of the division in the neighbourhood. They were certainly two industrialists who could be considered as among the ranks of the most notable men who had come to the new parish in its first quarter of a century – how one would like to hear a recording of the discussions of these two next door neighbours! Within these same ranks we must number several other men who were not all industrialists and who had lived locally, at least for some years, before moving closer to the new church, although not necessarily to join its congregation. Alexander Ireland and Arthur Ransome we have admired and must count them among the outstanding men of the area. We are not aware of any strong religious affiliation on the part of Ireland, but Ransome was an Anglican. John Mills was certainly another Congregationalist and perhaps the most remarkable of all in combining a great talent for practical affairs with a participation in the arts, but social thinking was perhaps not his strongest suit – as a free marketeer he may not have felt the need to preach philanthropy or the need

for positive social action. If we knew more about the many other owners of the mansions of Massey we might be able to rate them as highly as all these notables. Perhaps further research will be rewarded.

There is, however, one other man, William Crossley's brother Francis, who only fails by a whisker of topography to be a man of Massey (rather than of Bowdon), about whom we must say rather more than is stated above. He was almost certainly the engineering genius of the two brothers and also made a considerable fortune. He lived for some years at Fairlie on the corner of Cavendish and Catherine Roads, a massive structure now empty and boarded up. He was even more seriously religious than William and moved away from what he regarded as the complacency of the Anglican Church into Nonconformism and attended the Bowdon Downs Church for some years. Later he became very closely interested in Salvationism and almost joined the Army. Passionately concerned about social evils such as sweated labour and the widespread slums, he gave away money as fast as it came in. The damage done to people by alcohol caused him to become a teetotalter and to veto sales of his company's lifting engines to brewers.

Finally, he sold his great house at Bowdon and rebuilt the old Music Hall at Ancoats, in the midst of a low and degraded area of Manchester, at a cost of



Fairlie

some £20,000. The new building comprised a meeting hall with residences attached for working people as well as bathrooms and coffee rooms for the needs of the people around. Francis took his family to live in this building in accommodation so restricted that he somewhat incongruously noted that it was only because two of his children were away at school that the rest of the family were able to fit into the available space.

Before we end this narrative and try to digest its varied content into some general reflections, there is a tailpiece which takes us beyond our period but which is relevant and revealing.

Across the Dunham Road from the new church and from Glenfield and Park Gate, the homes of Crossley and Lee, is Beech Lawn also destroyed and replaced by modern utility architectural dwellings. Until 1888 at least Beech Lawn was occupied by Ruth Fildes, the widow of Joseph, with whom she had arrived some 30 years earlier, only two or three years after the church was finished, although they do not appear to have been among its supporters. Some time later probably not many years after 1888, their house was taken over by John Leigh and he must for a period have been a neighbour of Crossley if not Lee. His career will be summarised later but we should note here that he too became a Liberal MP and a baronet.

He was a man of limited philanthropy but conceived the idea of providing a public park. It so happened that towards the end of the First World War, Oldfield Hall was unoccupied and falling into disrepair so that Altrincham Council decided to pull it down. John Leigh offered to buy the land and present it to the public as a park. At the same time the Countess of Stamford announced that the late Earl had had ideas about providing land for working class housing and she was proposing to use the grounds of Oldfield Hall for this purpose. The matter was resolved by John Leigh buying the Hall grounds and laying them out as a park, while the Stamfords provided land, eventually amounting to some 50 acres, for what became Oldfield Brow estate where the council in due course built over 400 working class houses.

This development resurrected another feature of the extraordinary story of the founding of St. Margaret's church. The astonishing lengths to which the planners went to devise a large enough parish for the new church have been explained earlier in relation to the long arm of land extending south as far as Hale Moss. For the same reason another large area was included north of the church extending even into the countryside beyond Seamons Moss bridge over the canal. The western limit of this land eventually formed the boundary between the parish of St. Margaret's and St. Mark's in Dunham Town. The new working class estate was built right across the parish boundary. The Vicar of St. Margaret's tells a sad story of a tearful young lady from St. Mark's Avenue who had published her marriage banns in his church by mistake and thereby missed her proposed wedding day.

The comments and reflections which the Oldfield Brow story provokes are



St. Marks Avenue

many. To begin with these were the first houses built within hundreds of yards of the new church which were for anyone but upper middle class and near-rich or rich people, and it had taken well over 60 years for a start to be made. The start involved going from one near extreme of class to the other. The working class houses were to be segregated in a low-lying area below the ridge beloved of John and Isabel Mills and could hardly be observed from any of the mansions of Dunham Massey except perhaps from the tower and the turret of the folly of Woodleigh. The site was extremely inconvenient, being a long, long walk from shops, medical services, and other amenities, not to mention jobs other than those involving service to the mansions. Even today it is isolated and difficult for anyone who does not own a car and there are still some especially young people – or is not prepared to risk life and limb on a cycle. Retailers do not find it profitable to provide more than a small parade of shops offering basic commodities.

On the other hand, the working people of the area were perhaps grateful for relatively moderate mercies. The Oldfield Brow estate was quite pleasant and the standard of its houses good for the 1920s. After all, this was the land fit for the heroes of the war to live in, was it not? In fact, the 1914-18 was the first major step in the economic and social revolution which would eventually make the

mansions of Massey unviable. Slaughter on Flanders fields reduced the supply of young men for industry and increased the price of labour. Social consciences were violently aroused. There would still, however, be many industrialists who said it was stupid to educate the working classes, contrary to the declared views of Joseph Cocksey Lee and William Crossley, but progress was being made, if all too slowly as we know to our national cost today. It was surely a substantial social achievement for a small local council to build over 400 houses for working people. If you were to propose such a thing to Trafford Council today the response would be something approaching disbelief.

If the 50 acres of land devoted to the Oldfield Brow estate had been used for the kind of houses built nearer the church, in the Victorian period, the total number would have been more like 40 than 400. The extremely low density planned by the Earl of Stamford resulted in virtually all the available and convenient land being used by 1885, unless the open spaces were to be further reduced which became generally unacceptable. So no more modest middle class housing was built in the Dunham Massey township until after the middle of the 20th century when some land was released to the north of Harrington Road. Even later there were developments north of Oldfield Road towards the canal, all very much dependant on the automobile.

But earlier than this, in the inter-war period, even as the new working class housing was built, the mansions of Massey were proving to be unmanageable and unviable. The process of turning them into apartments became a business of its own. Some of them fell progressively into disuse and decay. In more recent years many more have become flats and quite a number have been converted and even extended into nursing homes. From the historical and visual perspective too many have fallen or been pulled down. They were indeed a short-lived social phenomenon. Yet one cannot help but regret that many attractive buildings have disappeared.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

We have now completed our historical, kaleidoscopic review of most of the people, or rather most of the heads of families, who chose to devote some of their new found wealth to living in the farthest south-western suburb of greater Manchester. We know all too little about most of them as individuals, although a handful stand out from the crowd for their eminence in industry and commerce or in the arts and medicine. Even so we can draw certain conclusions about them as a somewhat heterogeneous group.

Without counting heads, it is clear that a good half of these men (for, sadly, the few women appear mainly as widows) were directly involved in the cotton textile industry as manufacturers or merchants. There were several 'spinners' which is not surprising as Manchester was one of the early fine spinning centres. Many more were calico printers, a notable business in the Manchester area throughout the period. There is virtually no sign of anyone who was an old-style cotton master from one of the other Lancashire towns. It is true that Joseph Cocksey Lee at one period owned a works at Rawtenstall, but he was heavily involved in marketing. Moreover, Tootal Broadhurst Lee was so big that it must have had managers to run its factories. So we have to conclude that the men closely involved in cotton were effectively Manchester and Stockport Men.

Aside from the people more or less directly associated with the cotton textile industry, including Mr. Levi, the 'manufacturing clothier', we have noted a wide range of the commercial and professional people who were essential for a developing industrial society. These included merchants of various kinds, in slate, iron, and corn, for instance, or those specialising in particular parts of the world such as India or South America, most likely in textiles. Perhaps the most surprising representation was a fair number of wine and spirit merchants. There were also engineers, doctors, lawyers and architects, of course, as well as bankers and even an insurance man.

The wine and spirit men were quite conspicuous not only as occupiers of great houses but also as purchasers of land where houses were soon occupied by other people. The same entrepreneurial role was also played by architects and by men in the building trade. These latter must be counted as probably in the category of speculative builders, but the function of the others seems more ambiguous. One may speculate that an architect might buy a site either to design and build a house for sale or simply as a means of inducing someone to engage him for the design. But what about the wine merchants? One can only surmise that they had made enough money to finance speculative building. Finally, there were those styled 'gentlemen' whose function would seem to be similar.

Much of this land-buying activity is rather curious when undertaken in respect of such large sites and great houses. The role of the speculative builder, as such, appears to have been mainly confined to more modest properties, as one would expect. Many of the larger plots were bought by the men who would occupy the houses and who engaged architects to design them. Somewhere in between there appeared to have been a role for a well-to-do middleman. More research on individual cases might throw further light on this phenomenon and on the arrangements under which the houses were designed.

Clearly a fair proportion of all the new men of Massey must have had business which required their fairly regular attendance in and around Manchester. Increasingly, many of them must have travelled by train. We simply do not know the extent to which the wealthier of them went all the way by their own coaches and horses rather than use trains. Without modern traffic problems, the comparison between door-to-door times by the one method or the other could well have been a close run thing. Some men undoubtedly went by coach, private or 'taxi', to and from Bowdon Station but even so, their total journey time could hardly have been much less than going all the way by coach. The other option had been to go to town by the Bridgewater Canal, but one suspects this would have been rather slower, and the fast service or 'flyer' which took under an hour was discontinued in the mid-1850s.

This brings us to the interesting question as to whether the beginning of the Dunham Massey development in the 1850s was the direct result of the opening in 1849 of the rail link to Manchester. This is ultimately in the category of the unanswerable historical 'what if' question. What if there had been no railway for, say, another ten or 20 years, would the motivation of the newly-rich men of cotton and related trades to live in the beckoning countryside have been strong enough to bring about so early the building of houses in this delectable spot? There is clearly no definite answer to this question and it is unreal to vary one particular parameter of the developing historical process. However, the very fact that it is a difficult question emphasises the power of forces other than the attraction of the railway, i.e. the considerable wealth available and the enticing environmental advantages. It is far from being a simple question of the effect of the railway.

In any event there is the great mystery as to what was in the mind of the Earl of Stamford and his advisers when they decided to build the new church. Clearly they knew about the railway and the increased impetus this was likely to give to commuting to Manchester, although they would have found this difficult to quantify. The vital question is whether they would have proceeded with the building of the church if there had been no railway – 'what if' again!

In postulating that the Earl was so incensed at the rejection of his wife by the local church and people that he reacted with defiance in building his own church and creating his own parish, we may just be being realistic. On the other hand, we

may be unduly cynical. Perhaps there was behind this decision a real faith in God, a real belief in the need for a new church, a real confidence that many people would come to live near the church and worship in it. Who knows? In either case would the existence of the railway have been a decisive factor which tipped the balance? It is interesting to speculate but impossible to be certain about the answer. One suspects that the forces which led to the building of the church, in whatever manner they were precisely balanced, would have prevailed.

However that may be, the Earl did not come back and live in or near the new community even to test its reaction to him and his new wife. It seems doubtful whether he made any significant contact with the newly-rich people who settled around Dunham Hill (as the place was known in Altrincham) and its mysteriously founded church. But if he did not know them, what memories have they left with us? Have they left behind any great impact, either collectively or as a fair number of striking individuals? From the evidence so far available, and it is hard to believe that there are many lights so well hidden beneath the bushels of time that there is a vast amount of undiscovered evidence still to enlighten us, the answer has to be a tentative negative.

One important litmus test must surely be that Dunham Massey itself has hardly become a name to conjure with. The man in the Altrincham street today, asked the way to Dunham Massey, would probably scratch his metaphorical head and possibly direct one to Dunham Hall. When Kathleen Chorley came to visit Inglewood early this century she knew it was in Bowdon. Dunham Massey is an ancient township but its parish was carved out of Bowdon, and when the township was swallowed administratively by Altrincham, few people noticed. All this evidence indicates that a development which undoubtedly began its life as an integral part of a plan to build a new church initially surrounded by fields failed to grow a distinctive essence of its own which made it more than a suburb of Altrincham or an extension of Bowdon.

In fact, if one considers the evidence of Isabel Mills about the cultural activities of the area as enjoyed by John and herself, who lived first between Altrincham and Bowdon and then well over in Dunham Massey, one gets a very clear impression of the inspiration for them coming from Bowdon. Alexander Ireland, one of the inspirers, moved from Stamford Road to St. Margaret's Road probably without any feeling of moving away from Bowdon. Moreover, it is rather difficult to believe that there were important other activities and other leaders who Isabel Mills omitted to mention.

This is all hardly surprising. After all, Bowdon was a well-established village with an old church which had attracted William Neild, for instance, before the railway came to Altrincham. Already in 1864, when John Mills arrived at Thornfield, he found the extensive cultural circles to be a major compensation for the narrowness of his house, and presumably the reputation of Bowdon had attracted him there. So it looks very much as though the rather slow development

of Dunham Massey, retarded by the cotton famine in the early 1860s, simply provided a progressive accession to the cultural centre that was Bowdon.

There was, of course, one organisation which could possibly have constituted the heart of a new flowering of the mind – the new church. It did, however, have to contend with major handicaps. From the very start its parish was an elongated artificial creation with an empty heart. Also from the beginning it was beset by the presence of earlier established churches – St. Mary's of Bowdon and the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church. As regards the latter, it is of course not the case that the local people, older or newer residents, would really make a religious choice between the two, but rather that the geographical parish constituency, limited and sparsely populated as it was, had to be shared between their two sets of adherents.

We do not at present have all the evidence of assess their relative share of the inhabitants of the township of Dunham Massey by the 1880s but great majority of houses can be allocated to the one church or the other. We have already mentioned some of the early Congregationalists, but it is now appropriate to attempt as complete a list as possible. Among their members we can certainly count the Lees (the first owners of Glenfield), the Lees (the second occupants of Park Gate), the Mellands at the original Racefield and then possibly at Hill Carr, the



Seamons Moss School

Milnes at Westlind, the Mills at Northwold, the Mitchells at Hurstdale, the Thompsons at South Bank, the Woods at Earlsleigh, and probably the Thompsons who came to Beech Bank after the Levis. There were in addition the various representatives of the Armitage family, with Ziba living on the Higher Downs in the 1860s, and William occupying Townfield House, outside the Dunham Massey area. Clyde Binfield mentions Woodlands, home of J.J. McKenna, as a Congregational house. Finally, we must not forget Francis Crossley. Undoubtedly the Bowdon Downs Church also attracted a fair number of well-to-do people from Altrincham and Bowdon.

The Congregationalists were certainly quite wealthy. They not only built the Bowdon Downs Church as early as 1848 and substantially extended it twenty years later but they also provided some education for local children at the Oxford Road schools. All working-class education depended on the churches or private endowments, of which latter the school at Oldfield House, transferred to its new building nearby in 1867, was a good example.

As for the owners of the mansions and large villas of Dunham Massey, it is clear that increasingly they contributed to the enormous growth of the public school in the mid-Victorian period. We have the testimony of Clyde Binfield, for instance, that the Minister of Bowdon Downs Church sent his son to Rugby "as did his parishioners". Binfield also affirms that the Minister received a stipend of £1,000 a year – worth probably £30,000-£40,000 in 1990 money and much more in proportion to a typical working class *family* income of £50-£60 a year in the 1860s. In 1990 to secure an income of nearly 20 times that of an average working man would involve receiving almost a quarter of a million pounds – some people are so lucky but not many parsons! We know, of course, that the Reverend Mac-kennal, much respected by John Mills, lived at Highfield in St. Margaret's Road, at the more modest end of the street of wealth. Clearly some of his parishioners had incomes at least several times higher than his.

By 1872 there was another formidable nonconformist community in Dunham Massey in the shape of the Presbyterians of Scottish origin. Their church in Delamer Road still stands as an attractive representative of relatively plain Gothic architecture, without the kind of somewhat ornate decoration which makes the Bowdon Downs church less appealing, at least to this writer's modern eye.

This history of St. Margaret's Church has not been written to the same extent as that of the Bowdon Downs Church, but according to evidence from various sources, including the marriage register and various church accounts, the following is a minimum list of the owners of the major houses who were attached to it.

William Horsfall

of *Dunham Mount*. (In 1864 Emmelina Horsfall was married in St. Margaret's to Spencer Henry Bickham, silk manufacturer and son of a father of the same name who lived in Green Walk. It is interesting that the Bickham family gave financial support to the church, although

	they lived in Bowdon. They were not the only ones.)
Bulkeley Allen	of <i>West Lynn</i> , son of John Allen of <i>Oldfield Hall</i> . The Allens were among the principal supporters of St. Margaret's from the outset.
Joseph Compton	of <i>Oakleigh</i> .
William Crossley	second owner of <i>Glenfield</i> whose brother Francis was married in the church in 1871 but later attended Bowdon Downs Church.
Benson Clegg	of <i>Parkside</i> (Chaseley today).
Neville Clegg	son of Benson Clegg, who later lived at <i>Oldfield Brow</i> but who was married at St. Margaret's in 1864 to Lucy Bellhouse of Ashton-under-Mersey. (Both father and son described themselves as 'gentleman' for the register.)
William Samuel Mainprice	who was married at St. Margaret's in 1878 and subsequently lived at <i>Longcroft</i> .
James Seddon	of <i>Racehill</i> whose daughter was married in the church in 1855.
Joseph Grafton	of <i>Overdale</i> who became a church warden in 1871. He owned the local Grafton Engineering Works and in 1896 bought the former Wesleyan chapel in Regent Road which was translated into a Mission church to St. Margaret's essentially for the poor people who lived in overcrowded nearby streets.
Joseph Sidebotham	of <i>The Beeches</i> where he succeeded Ibbotson Walker who had been so prominent in the founding of the Congregational church along the road. His son John Sidebotham, cotton master, was married in the church in 1867; and he presented a window in 1872.
Charles Hinde	of <i>Woodleigh</i> who put a memorial window in the church in gratitude to God for restoration from a serious illness.
Robert Hinde	at <i>Ellerslie</i> who earlier had seemed to be a Catholic.
Arthur Ransome	of <i>Devisdale House</i> who in 1862 was married in the church. He was a witness at the wedding of Alfred Neild in 1859.
Joseph Allen Sutcliffe	of <i>Beechmount</i> whose daughter was married in the church in 1870 to a coal proprietor of Wigan.

Henry Hugh Reece	Schoolmaster at <i>Oldfield House</i> who was married in the church in 1858.
Richard Broadbent	Surgeon and Mayor of Altrincham who lived at <i>Oak House</i> and two of whose daughters were married in the church in 1856 and 1858.
Henry Dickinson	Of <i>Hurstdale</i> who became a church warden in 1875.
Richard Ogle	of <i>Woodend</i> .
The Bellhouse family	of <i>Groby Road</i> .
William Watterson	of <i>Hill Carr</i> .
James Cooper	of <i>Westlind</i> .
Mrs. Tate	of <i>St. Margaret's Road</i> .
Miss Hodgson	of <i>South Bank</i> .
Mrs. Welsh	of <i>Northlands</i> .
R. Shiers	of <i>Earlscliffe</i> .
Henry Brewer	of <i>Park View</i> .
Miss Ray	the lady who apparently bought <i>Harefield House</i> .
R. Curtis	of <i>Limehurst</i> .
The Atkinsons	of <i>West Wood</i> .
Dr. Roberts	of <i>Groby Place</i> .
A. Cuffley	of <i>North Bank</i> , St. John's Road – the man who sold Park Gate to Mr. Philippi.
The Johnsons	of <i>Park Side</i> .
Joseph Gaskarth	of <i>Park Lea</i> , whom one had supposed might be Jewish.
Sir Joseph Cocksey Lee	of <i>Park Gate</i> , very surprisingly, but we noted earlier that he moved towards Anglicanism later in his life. He appears to have been paying a pew rent by 1877 and he certainly donated £5 towards church expenses in 1882.
Mr. Gaddum	another owner of a <i>Green Walk</i> mansion.

This is a formidable list of the Anglicans of Dunham Massey which does not by any means include everyone, but is unlikely to exclude any of the owners of the larger houses and mansions whom we have mentioned earlier who were regu-

lar supporters of the church. Clearly many more of these wealthier people were Anglicans than Congregationalists. However, it appears that the numbers of active parishioners did not expand as strongly as one might have expected. This was partly because of the foundation of St. John's in 1867. The marriage register provides clear confirmation that up to that time a large area of southern Altrincham in the direction of Hale was included in St. Margaret's parish. For instance, although the bride and groom usually gave their addresses as only 'Altrincham' or 'Bowdon' or, much less often, 'Dunham Massey', one couple in 1858 did admit to living in Islington Street which was in the area now occupied by Sainsburys or further south towards Hale. This area was part of the territory ceded to St. John's in 1867.

The number of weddings at St. Margaret's averaged 21.7 per annum from 1858 to 1867 varying considerably from year to year, with a maximum of 30 in 1862 and a minimum of 13 in 1864 rising again steadily to 27 in 1867. But in 1868 it went down to nine and averaged only 14.4 through 1877 and 12.6 thereafter until 1885. The effect of the opening of St. John's Church is quite obvious. What is perhaps more surprising is that the marriage stakes did not recover or increase thereafter at St. Margaret's. Further, nearly all the weddings were between working class people or quite modest traders. Barely one a year on average involved a gentleman or lady from the big houses of Dunham Massey.

A somewhat similar picture emerges from an examination of the payment of pew rents. The church as originally built accommodated some 700 people and one third of the places were to be available without charge, leaving some 460 to be paid for. Within a few years the number of people paying for pews rose to around 100, but presumably each pew could accommodate more than one person. A few people paid for more than one pew. For the last six months of 1863 the total paid was £289 11s 6d of which £77 17s 0d was for rates. By 1879 the total was £328 of which £101 was for rates.

In 1875 a special appeal for the Vicarage Fund raised £2,410 from some 60 people led by Mr. Allen of Oldfield Hall who gave £235, Messrs. Sidebotham, Norris, Hodgson, Jones, Cooper (who each gave £120), Mrs. Horsfall (£100), Messrs. Fullerton (£60), Bellhouse (£65), Grafton (£70), Neville Clegg (£55), Compton (£50), Spencer Bickham (£50), and many others who gave amounts from £70 to £10. The last incidentally included both Robert and Charles Hinde. In the following year an appeal for funds for the repair and extensions of the organ raised £747.

It seems clear enough that the new Anglican church attracted the support of a substantial body of the new arrivals who lived in the major houses as they were built in the close neighbourhood. However, this support did reach a plateau quite early. There was presumably a sufficient number to ensure good congregations on Sunday, although it seems clear that the two different classes went to different services, the well-to-do in the morning and the working class in the eve-

ning. The church was certainly strong enough to administer the Albert Street Schools as well as supervising the Oldfield School and to establish other schools in what became the parish of St. John's.

Nevertheless, it seems very doubtful whether the upper class of parishioners were individually or collectively able to provide a highly charged nucleus of an alternative intellectual and cultural society to that already established in Bowdon. Indeed it is very doubtful whether this was really a feasible proposition from the outset. The new church society was inevitably on the outside, looking into a quite mature group, or series of groups, in Bowdon. Even more fundamentally, it seems questionable whether the Anglican church itself was capable of providing the stimulus or cohesion for the creation and maintenance of a new social grouping. In Bowdon, of course, there were two rival churches neither of which appears to have dominated the cultural society, although they were probably important in helping to cement personal and social relationships, particularly among the Congregationalists.

Perhaps an even more basic question is whether the newly arrived, newly rich parishioners possessed the personal qualities on an individual basis which could have contributed substantially to the making of a general mark on the area or even a combination of individual marks of note. As we have already suggested, the public record appears so far to indicate that only a handful of them were outstandingly successful in business or political life and hardly any in the arts. No doubt most of them were content to live normal family lives with the benefit of substantial wealth derived from their own roles in the new industrial and commercial world of the mid Victorian period. Our evidence is all too limited to reach a considered judgment. Nevertheless, there is one major body of evidence which we are in danger of overlooking, i.e. the very mansions in which these well-to-do people lived.

We have already noted the various ways in which these great houses were provided and designed; and we have described many of them in general terms – that is to say not in technical architectural terms. We now need to consider the totality of the houses created in Dunham Massey in the short period of thirty-odd years. At this moment we are handicapped by the fact that a number of the more important houses have been destroyed, yet it is necessary to make some kind of assessment.

Earlier in this review it has been mentioned that architecture flourished in Manchester in our period. It was, in fact, a time of great turbulence in architectural style in England as the classical revival of the 18th century was in turn challenged by the Gothic revival of the 19th and a fierce battle was being fought between the rival forces. It is fascinating to reflect that just as the new church of St. Margaret's was being planned and built a certain John Ruskin was undertaking a remarkable and detailed study of the architecture of Venice which resulted in his writing a wonderful book entitled *'The Stones of Venice'*. Ruskin rejected Re-

naissance classicism in favour of the virile, flexible and irregular Gothic architecture, and his was a powerful influence towards the predominance achieved by the latter in England, as the Victorian era developed. However, in the third quarter of the century, classicism was still predominant in the north of the country, including Manchester.

We do not have the space to do more than mention this subject as part of the general background and to remark that the topical architectural debate caused attention to be drawn to many aspects of earlier great periods, notably in Italy, from which architects in Manchester could draw specific styles and features which appealed to them or their clients. For instance, we have noted with admiration the use in a number of houses of groups of simple narrow windows capped by quite plain semi-circular arches, often supported by capitals at the heads of the side pillars. This design goes right back to the middle of the Mediaeval Period and is often known as Byzantine or Romanesque. It was superseded by the pointed and decorated Gothic arch and gable which offered much greater strength and wider opportunity for attractive adornment. When the Venetians, in what Ruskin called their decline, turned against Gothicism, they resurrected the older simpler forms, both Byzantine and Classical, which were much admired in England.

Another of Ruskin's passionate beliefs was that the best architecture made full use of strong colours, whilst pale or colourless buildings reflected decadence in architecture and society. It would be unrealistic to push this logic too far in respect of the great houses of Dunham Massey, but it is certainly noteworthy that the predominant white brick and pale stone so beloved of the Earl and his advisers (perhaps with a vested interest in the supply of the bricks at least) were hardly conducive to the creation of buildings which were individually appealing to the general view. In the mass they must have been rather cold and even depressing. Certainly, some of the more attractive houses are those which are built of warm red brick in well proportioned designs, such as Hill Carr or Oakleigh; or which make good use of yellow, orange or russet colour such as Holmeacre or Ellerslie, the former being a good example of the effect of the Italian Renaissance with its terra-cotta decoration.

Quite apart from the unimaginative use of white brick, a fair proportion of the houses are somewhat depressingly undistinguished, even drab. It perhaps not without significance that some of these are today so obscured by bushes and trees that they are barely visible enough to be appreciated from any angle, as if their owners had become ashamed of them. Certainly people who are proud of their houses do not hide them like this but ensure good settings for them.

On the other hand, there are the three Italianate villas at the south-east end of St. Margaret's Road which, although originally displaying white brick, are attractively different from the typical house pattern of the area. There are also those which, although not particularly distinguished, have shape and balance to them

which makes them significant buildings. Inglewood and its neighbours on St. Margaret's Road are quite impressive without being architecturally wonderful. Finally, there are the houses such as Northlea and Morningside, which give the impression, through their apparent low profile and their decoration with shrubs and creepers, of being friendly and homely cottages with their coach houses forming fitting parts of their ensembles.

It is only when one arrives at the later and large mansions in the Park area, which we have already discussed, that one finds the strikingly different effect in some of them which presumably was inspired by the Gothic revival, although none of the surviving buildings are really Gothic in design. Limehurst, of a somewhat earlier (1870) vintage also has something of a similar extravagance with its three square towers piled one on top of the other. It is as if the larger fortunes accumulated by the 1870s went along with the architectural trend to stimulate a kind of 'folie de grandeur' producing residences which had some pretence to be castles if not cathedrals. It is interesting that along Green Walk, Bowdon, where some massive mansions were built earlier, they did not nearly match in architectural extravagance the only one belonging to the 1870s.

Standing back and viewing the whole spectrum of the Victorian houses of Dunham Massey one has to be impressed by the great miscellany of the architectural pattern, as mixed indeed as the owners themselves, despite a very common connexion of one kind or another to the cotton industry and trade. A fair proportion of the houses are attractive, even interesting, to look at and taken together they do form a striking group with few parallels. The streets would be brighter and pleasanter places to walk along if the houses were more readily visible. Yet the considerable visual and intellectual pleasure which one gains from their contemplation must be tempered, in the end, by a sense of some disappointment that it is difficult to describe any single one of them as possessing outstanding architectural merit or distinction.

So it is necessary to repeat that all these well-to-do Victorian people, with such considerable resources at their disposal, failed to produce buildings of the originality or beauty for which one might have hoped – not, for instance, as attractive or distinctive as the external appearances of some of the Manchester public buildings and warehouses. It may well be argued that a house is so much smaller than one of these that it does not offer the same scope for artistic flair. There may be some truth in that assertion, but perhaps more to the point is that the task of designing houses, even substantial ones, was too new. In the past there had been opportunity only for the planning of the limited number of the vaster country houses of the landed gentry, and it perhaps significant that Woodend, one of the more attractive of the mansions in the Park, bore some similarity to the great houses of centuries earlier.

It is also significant that the *British Architect* article of 1874 which specified the requirements for the 'The Country Mansions of Manchester' evidently took it for

granted that these needed to be explained since there were no obvious precedents. (Incidentally it is also somewhat astonishing that in its descriptions of various mansions built during the 1870s it confined itself to facts and offered no comments on architectural styles.) We therefore have to conclude that we are judging both a general phenomenon and a particular development at Dunham Massey which were breaking very fresh ground. So it is hardly surprising that the new Men of Massey were generally not inspired or cultured enough to require their Mansions to be architecturally brilliant.

It is in this light of the newness of everything, of the wealth above all, that we have to view the mid-Victorian experience. The situation was so novel, the wealth so extreme, that with hindsight it seems almost inevitable that what this brief age produced was so ephemeral even its industrial supremacy. Its gross inequality was socially and politically unacceptable, and its great houses, dependant upon cheap uneducated labour in industry and domestic service, were not economically viable for more than a few decades. Only a handful of the Dunham Massey houses, and principally the more modest ones, remain in 1990 in sole ownership and occupation. It is hardly surprising that the newly-rich men of this age were unable to commission much in the way of distinctive and original domestic architecture. Yet, with humility, we should acknowledge that we have not, to put it mildly, been so successful since that we can lightly afford to destroy the historical and pleasantly visual legacy of an astonishing age.

We cannot, however, leave there our assessment of the Victorian Men of Massey and of their church of St. Margaret. For if we go no further, we are in danger of concentrating overmuch on the material achievements of the age even though these include their architectural manifestations. For all their wealth and their exuberance, we have found these and other cultural achievements falling short of what, with hindsight, we imagine they might have been. We should remember that John Ruskin went so far as to argue that architecture reflected the spiritual or moral aspects of the age, and regarded the classical revival as a sign of decadence. Yet to follow him too far down this avenue of argument would divert us away from what is central to this local historical review.

We should further remember, however, that Ruskin was so concerned about the social evils of the new industrial age that he devoted much of his life to challenging its moral basis in writings such as *'Unto This Last'*. For this challenge he was much vilified and he attracted little support even from those who were supposed to be concerned about moral issues, i.e. the religious fraternity. There were exceptions such as Kingsley and the other Christian Socialists. But for a long time children were sent up chimneys and women down mines. And slums continued to fester.

We do not know in any detail how the wealthy parishioners of St. Margaret's Church, or indeed their 19th century vicars, reconciled their privileged positions with the degrading conditions in which their workpeople in Manchester and Al-

trincham existed. We know that they displayed quite commendable concern for the education and religious instruction of the local people. We know that a few of their most eminent, apparently most religious and certainly most wealthy members became outstandingly philanthropic and even outspoken about the evils which needed to be remedied. We know that Francis Crossley, perhaps the most truly religious of all, moved from Anglicanism to Nonconformism and almost to the Salvation Army, before taking the dramatic course most nearly approaching the precept of Christ about giving one's wealth to the poor. Yet all this admirable manifestation of conscience surely fell well short of a really spiritual and moral attitude on the part of the Churches as a whole to the evils of the age.

In order to consider what might have been, we need to jump forward once more to the 20th century. In 1905 a new curate was appointed to St. Margaret's in the person of the Reverend Hewlett Johnson and in 1908 he became Vicar. He had graduated in scientific and engineering subjects and had undergone some direct industrial experience during which he had been in close contact with working-class people, although he was himself the son of a well-to-do wire manufacturer. In many ways he was an exemplar of that very Victorian phenomenon of muscular Christianity, delighting in taking parties of his parishioners to the mountains and seaside of North Wales and even to the continent of Europe. He described his parishioners as being "as distinguished and delightful a company of industrial and professional magnates as in any parish in the land".

Yet underneath all this endearing leadership and evident attendant popularity, Hewlett Johnson became increasingly aware that something was badly wrong with the society inherited from the Victorians. Even in Altrincham itself, a fair way from the large-scale slum conditions of Manchester and other towns, there were still some streets where the poor were crammed in conditions which aroused the Vicar's horror and indignation. A particularly nauseating aspect was the prevalence of disease resulting from the vast quantities of horse manure in the areas of the many stables in the town. (The present writer has a vivid memory of a similar though smaller scale pollution in Warwickshire not long before the Second World War.)

Hewlett Johnson tried hard privately to persuade the Altrincham Council to take measures to improve conditions, but eventually he was driven to bring matters out into the open. In 1914 a Petition to the Local Government Board was drawn up and signed by a number of leading parishioners complaining about "Insanitary Property in the Urban District Council of Altrincham". Inevitably the onset of the First World War reduced further the chances of early action as minds and resources were directed to other activities.

Prominent among local concerns was care for war casualties. A number of the large mansions of the area became temporary hospitals. Notable among these was Haigh Lawn, bought and equipped for the purpose by Sir John Leigh, a man who was apparently not particularly noted for his philanthropy despite his provision of a park. Mary Johnson, the Vicar's wife, became Commandant of Haigh Lawn

and two other military hospitals, whilst her husband ministered to the sick and dying. Hewlett Johnson was almost a pacifist and his concern for German prisoners provoked bitter controversy, echoed in the 1980s.

It is perhaps worth saying a little more about Sir John Leigh by way of a quotation from Hewlett Johnson's autobiography.

'No one lived at the top of the [Dunham] hill who had a fortune of less than a quarter of a million and many had much more, but none were quite so rich as Sir John Leigh who began in clogs in Lancashire, and became owner of a large cotton mill. He was a very hard man in business and privately'.

The total cost of buying and equipping Haigh Lawn was reported at £20,000 but Sir John told Hewlett Johnson, perhaps not too seriously, that it cost him two weeks' income. The autobiography concludes "Leigh disliked my Socialist talk and ways and did all he could to nullify any influence I had in the parish".

After the end of the war, in 1919, the Vicar became concerned with the apathy and depression in the country and the poor attendance at church but in the following year there was a distinct improvement which led Hewlett Johnson to make some interesting comments at a parish council meeting which he recorded in the minutes in his own bold hand.

'There is a much more cheerful story this year. The very marked increase in general willingness to help and in the size of the growing congregation and the development of children's work was, he believed, a feature of many other churches. That seemed to betoken a renewed seriousness of outlook and he hoped it was the earnest of that coming of the New England of which during the war we heard so much and of which immediately after the war we had seen so little.'

We do not have space to follow the story of Hewlett Johnson and to go with him on his spiritual and political odyssey from specific attempts to remedy the defects of Victorian capitalism through the logical attractions of Christian Socialism to his eventual support of Communism which earned him fame as the Red Dean of Canterbury. It is, however, of particular interest that he was a close friend of Archbishop William Temple whose sermons and lectures proclaiming a strong moral case for social action were largely responsible for the present writer's early membership of the Anglican Church.

The point of overriding importance to make about Hewlett Johnson was that, though strongly supported by some leading members of St. Margaret's Church, such as Judge Spencer Hogg, who lived at Orchard House, still standing on Oldfield Road, he was one of the very few voices in the established church which expressed strong concern about the obverse of the coin, golden as one side was, of Victorian society. Even his crying in the wilderness took place in the early 20th century in an age which was soon to experience political and social earthquakes disturbing what had no doubt appeared to the Men of Massey as near-paradise.

Before he left Dunham Massey in 1924 for Manchester and later Canterbury, Hewlett Johnson had been so encouraged by his growing congregation that he planned a substantial extension of his church for which finance was promised by



St. Margaret's Church 1990

an anonymous donor. Unfortunately the money ran out before the work was finished, apparently after Mary Grafton died. It was generally thought that she had been the donor. The evidence that it was never possible to complete the extensions can be observed on the exterior of the walls at the western end of the building.

So the church with which we began our story changed substantially in appearance in the 1920s, losing its spire but acquiring a longer nave. It is still a striking sight from across the road, although the exterior needs some repair and cleaning. The interior is undoubtedly attractive, some would say beautiful, in dignified Gothic style – the term perpendicular which has been used to describe it seems hardly appropriate. In contrast to the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church, it has survived the long years in spirit as well as in body. Yet it still suffers from the sparsity of its close parish population, and funds for its maintenance are hard to come by. It will require caring imagination and determination for it to be preserved for another century. Even to many of the people who are not regular church-goers the idea of destroying such a building somehow seems wrong and unnatural. In many of us a feeling of awe goes with our sense of history as we wonder at the mystery of the church.

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St. Margaret's Church

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1852 Board of Health Map of Altrincham (excludes most of Dunham Massey) in Altrincham Library.

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1850 map of area proposed to be allocated to the new church (St. Margaret's Church papers in Cheshire Record Office).

1882 and 1911 Ordnance Survey Maps in Altrincham Library. 1" to 1 mile.

STREET DIRECTORY OF VICTORIAN HOUSES

DUNHAM MASSEY TOWNSHIP

(excluding Higher Downs and Delamer Road)

House names as in 1990; original names in brackets. Page references are the principal ones only.

Page Ref.	House Names	Approx. Yr Built, & Designers	Original Occupier (Occupation),
	<i>Bonville Road</i>		
	Newstead (destroyed)	1881	Charles Cummins
57, 58, 61, 62	Park Side (destroyed)	1876	Robert Johnson
	Woodlands (destroyed)	1877 Salomons & Ely	J.J. McKenna (Wine & Spirit Merchant)
57	Normanby (destroyed)	1889	Edward Napier Galloway
57	Overdale	1879	John Grafton (Calico Printer)
	<i>Bowdon Road</i>		
24, 63	Beech Bank	1854	Reuben Levi (Manufacturing Clothier)
25	Beech Mount	1860	Robert Edelstein (Calico Printer)
	<i>Bradgate Road</i>		
57	Dunham Lawn (destroyed)	1874	Albert Jordan (Commission Merchant)
	Longcroft (destroyed)	1884	Wm. Samuel Mainpiece
57, 59, 62	Annandale	1883	Fred Travers
57, 59	Oldfield Brow (destroyed)	1877	Neville Clegg (Calico Printer)
57, 59, 60, 61, 62	Woodend (destroyed)	1878 Asakel Bell & George Roper	Richard Ogle (Iron Merchant)
57, 61, 62	Woodleigh	1873	Charles Hinde (Solicitor)
	<i>Cavendish Road</i>		
14, 30	South Bank	1852	Joseph Thompson (Cotton Weaver & Merchant)

52, 53	<i>Devisdale Road</i> Hurst Dale	1875	Henry Dickinson (Merchant)
52, 53	Silverlands (destroyed)	1873 Hopton & Bridgford	1881 J.J. Eccleston (Silk Manufacturer)
52	Dunham Knoll	1895	Edmund Nicholas Hever
52, 54	Earlscliffe (destroyed)	1873	Richard Shiers
52	The Sycamores	1873	Wm. Archer (Iron Merchant)
34, 35, 36	<i>Dorset Road</i> Northwold	1871	John Mills (Banker)
50	Fairhope (Kenwood) (Destroyed)	1871	James Lamb (Upholsterer)
13, 18, 19	<i>Dunham Road</i> Dunham Mount	1855	Wm. Horsfall (Cotton Merchant and Manufacturer)
13, 18, 19, 65 42	Glenfield (destroyed) Race Hill	1855 1869	Joseph Leese (Cotton Spinner) (1881 James Seddon)
19, 69	Beech Lawn	?Ernest Bates 1858	?(Solicitor) Joseph Fildes (Distiller)
43, 44, 45 43, 44	Chomlea West Lynn	1873 1869	?John Lees Barker Bulkeley Allen (Merchant)
43, 45, 81	Oakleigh	1868	Joseph Compton (Calico Printer)
43, 44	Chaseley (?Oakville/Parkside)	1869	Wm. Benson Clegg (Merchant & Manufacturer)
43, 46	Parkdale	?1870s	?John Shaw (Nurseryman)
30, 54-57	Denzell House	1874 Clegg & Knowles	Robert Scott (Financial Director)
31, 32	<i>Gorse Lane</i> The Knoll (destroyed)	1864	Benjamin D. Naylor (Merchant)
52	<i>Grey Road</i> Northlands/ Aucklands	1880s <i>(on 1876 OS Plan)</i>	Richard J. Kerr & Catherine Welsh

42	<i>Grobby Road</i> Home Hill/Longford	1869	John Barker (Member of Manchester Stock Exchange) Bellhouse Family
42	Green Oaks/ Southside	1869	
50-51	Earlsleigh	?1874	George Stanley Wood (Cotton Spinner)
51-52	<i>Harrington Road</i> Five-Ways (Braeside)	1880	F. Venable Williams (Calico Printer)
52	Harrington	1891	Frederick Ford Smith
20, 63	<i>Highgate Road</i> Park Gate (Modernised)	1859 Alexander Cuffley	Edward Philippi (Twist Merchant) (1871 Joseph Cocksey Lee)
20, 63	Oldfield Bank	1858	Richard Massey (Retired Merchant)
46, 82	Morningside	?1869 (see Northlea, Suffolk Road),	Catherine Kerr (Widow)
32	<i>St. Johns Road</i> Thornfield/ Holly Bank Levenhurst (Oakfield)	?1858 1856	?John Mills – Thornfield (Banker) Dr. Alexander Paterson (Surgeon)
22, 82	<i>St. Margaret's Road</i> Beechthorpe (Devisdale Cottage)	1858 (probably designed by Travis)	Henry Travis (Architect)
23, 82	Highfield	1859 (?Travis)	Rev'd. J.E. Booth (1861 John Hilton) (Merchant & Manufacturer)
22, 23, 82	Fernroyd	1860 (?Travis)	?Robert Heywood McKearn (Surgeon)
24, 25	Westfield (Osborne Villa) (destroyed)	1858	Sigismund Schloss (General Merchant)
27	Parkside/Danebury/ (Parkview)	1853	Misses Wilson

27	Woodville (N & S)	1856	John Ollivant (Silversmith)
28	Westlind/Leahurst	1855	Francis Milne (Cotton Spinner)
28/29	Holmeside <i>Darby (Racefield) Crane</i>	1861	Wm. Melland (Cotton & Linen Manufacturer)
29	Racefield (Oak Hill)	1866 <i>William Melland</i>	John Arkwright (Medical Practitioner)
41, 42, 82	Limehurst	1870	?Richard Curtis (Machine Maker)
40, 81	Hill Carr	1868	?Wm. Melland (see Holmeside) or Wm. Craven Watterson (Member of Stock Exchange)
40	Westwood	1873 ?Asakel Pilkington Bell	?Henry Atkinson (Attorney & Solicitor)
36-39	Inglewood	1870	Alexander Ireland (Publisher)
37, 39, 40, 89	Haigh Lawn	1869	George Hodgkinson (Cotton Manufacturer)
39	Devisdale House (destroyed)	1869	Dr. Arthur Ransome (surgeon)
46, 82	<i>Suffolk Road</i> Northlea	1869 (similar to Morningside in Highgate Road at rear)	Edward Collins (Corn Merchant)
46-48	Holmeacre	1869	?F. Charles Ede (Merchant)
50	Holmrook	1871	?
46-48	Ellerslie	1870	Robert Hinde (Merchant)
50	White House (Park Lea)	1873	Joseph Gaskarth (Wine Merchant)
3, 4, 29	<i>Woodville Road</i> The Beeches (now St. Anne's Hospital)	pre-1850	(1850) Ibbotson Walker (Merchant & Manufacturer)
29	Harefield House (destroyed)	c. 1850	?William M. Millington (Owner of Land)
4, 5	(Downs Cottage)	pre-19th century	(1850) Maxwell Roscoe (Surveyor)
(25)	Hall Bank/Harthill	1855	?
(25)	Hill Crest/Chases Wood	1855	?

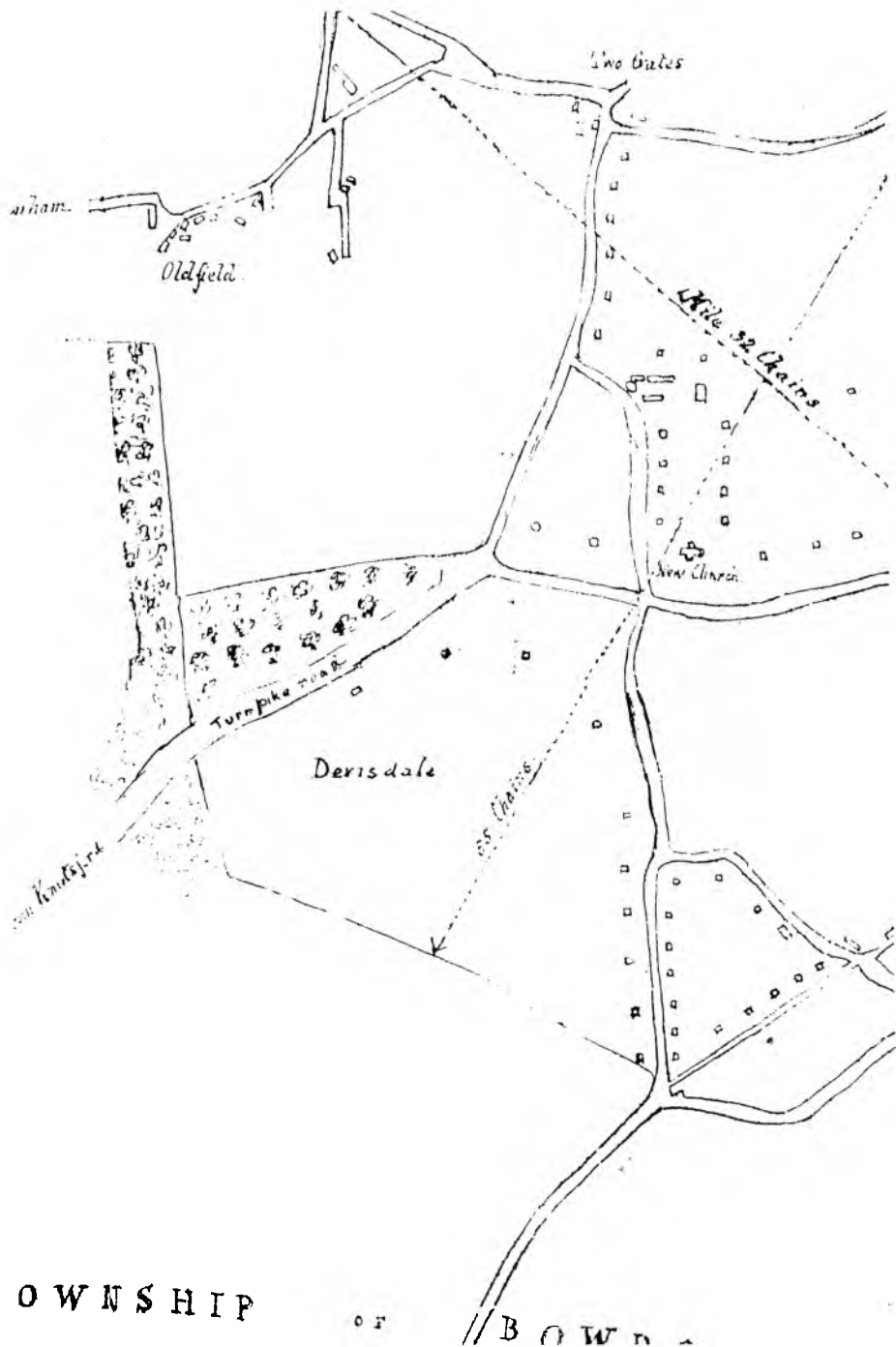
25, 27, 65	Grove House	1855	James Watson (Calico Printer)
27	Darley Grove	?1859	Alfred Richardson (Cotton Manufacturer)

OTHER HOUSES MENTIONED IN TEXT

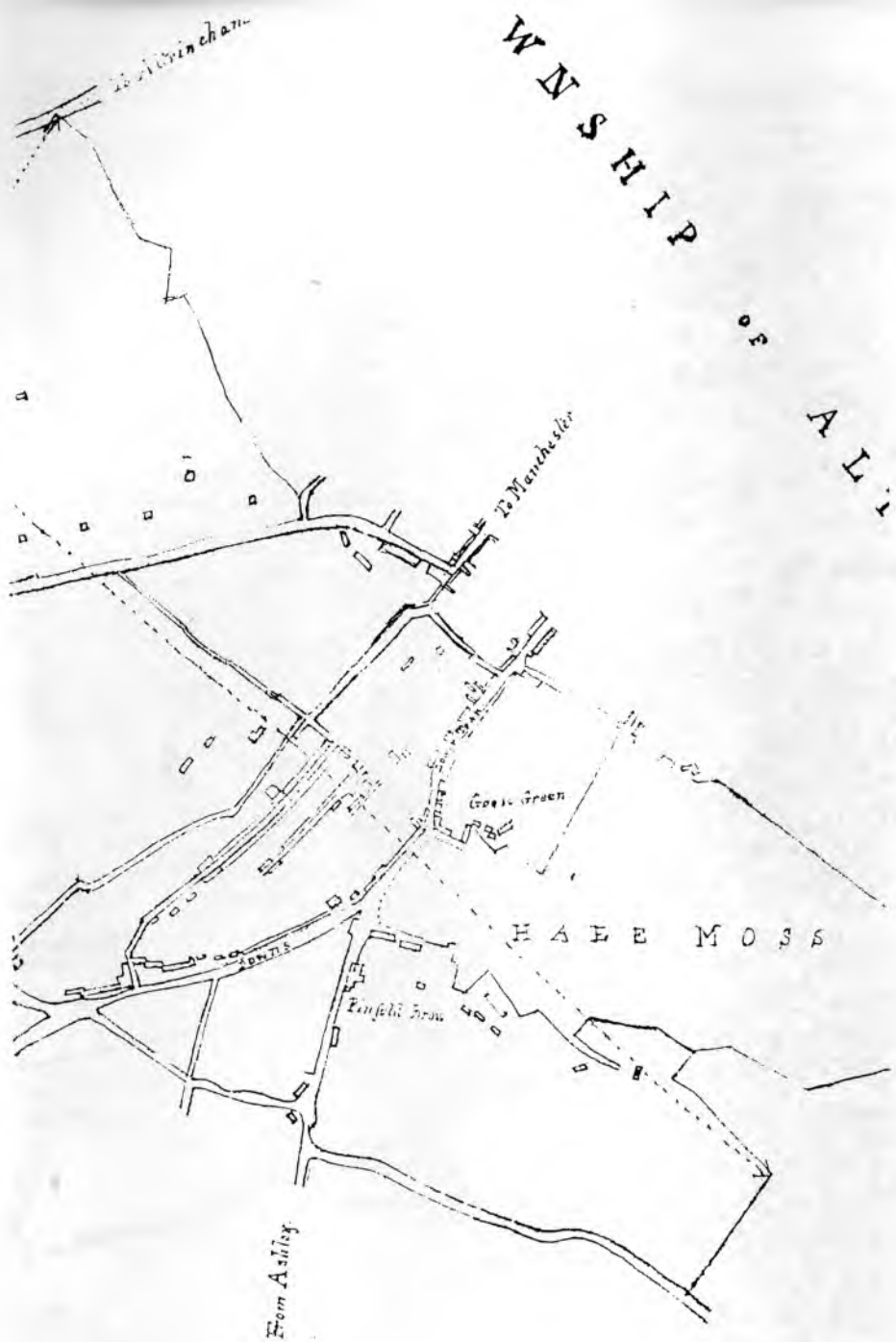
<i>Dunham Road, Altrincham</i>			
18	Oak House (destroyed)	1850s	Richard Broadbent (Surgeon)

<i>Catherine Road, Bowdon</i>			
68, 69	Fairlie	?1870	?Francis Crossley

<i>Green Walk, Bowdon,</i>			
56	Erlesdene	1874	Mills & Murgatroyd
49, 56	Oakley, 1860s,		
49, 55	Bowdon Croft	1860s	
	(Brunswick House)		
	Hawthornden	1860s	
	(destroyed)		
49, 55-56	Bickham House	1850s	
	(Gorsefield)		
49, 56	Hilston House	1860s	



1850 Map showing area proposed for new church.



In the year 1855 a handsome and striking new Gothic church was consecrated in the township of Dunham Massey and the Parish of Bowdon. Although it was placed on a hill on the main road running into Altrincham from Chester, with a wonderful view to the north, there was only a handful of houses within a radius of almost a third of a mile.

'Mansions and Men of Dunham Massey' sets this astonishing episode in its historical context and seeks to throw light on the mystery of the decision to build the new church. It traces the creation during the following 30 years of a uniquely wealthy suburb and parish around the church, which was planned and controlled on behalf of the Earl of Stamford.

The architecture of the great houses is described and assessed with its mixture of the traditional, the plain and undistinguished, the classical and the Italianate, and, finally, the excessive extravagance of Victorian Gothic on the fringes of the forest. Various as were the designs and sizes of the mansions, all had the common feature of being dependant on servants living-in, for whom appropriate provision was made.

The great wealth which made this astonishing incursion into the countryside possible was dependant on very cheap labour, both in the factories and in the mansions themselves. The vast inequality on which the system was built effectively limited its life to little more than half a century. While it lasted, its attendant evils of poverty, overcrowded and insanitary slums, its lack of proper education for all but a modest minority, gradually attracted the concern of enlightened men, including some of the richest who were also some of the most religious, particularly Francis Crossley who sold his mansion to build a working-men's hostel at Ancoats and to live there himself.