

BONDEND and CREED PLACE (BOWDEN HALL),
UPTON ST. LEONARDS

by John V. Ruffell

In his account of the parish of Upton St. Leonards, Samuel Rudder wrote: "Creed's Place is a very handsome new brick house, the property and residence of Robert Campbell Esq., who built it upon an estate which he purchases of John Guise, Esq., about the year 1770" (1)

Creed's Place, later to be known as Bowden Hall, was to become the most important house in the village, and its occupants were to play a leading role in its life until the 1920s; being responsible for building the school, the club and the village hall. The Hall itself, although extended and internally much altered, still stands in a well-wooded park in a dominating position over-looking the village.

The manorial history of Upton is complicated: there were three manors in the village itself, but the manor of Dudstone also had some land within the parish belonging to the Guise family. One manor house, Grove Court, alone survived; but Prinknash House and Park were also in the parish, as was Whitley Court, the home of the Small family, and we may well wonder how a new house came to be built where it was.

The original village was situated close of the Sudbrook along the present High Street, with the church on her ground to the north east. Open fields were extensive, but by the time of the inclosure in 1897 had degenerated into fourteen fields of various sizes. Other fields were marked on the Inclosure Award map (2) as old inclosures, and the visual evidence of ridge and furrow would indicate that in the middle ages the common fields were much more extensive. A little to the east of the Sudbrook is another small valley, formed by the river Twyver, and to the east of the Twyver there is Nut Hill, an outlier of the Cotswolds like Robinswood and Church-down hills, but much smaller, rising some sixty metres above the stream. This hill was too steep for easy cultivation and probably formed thirty or forty acres of waste surrounded by cultivated open fields. On the Twyver is Upton Mill, the oldest part of which is half-timbered. Nearby are two handsome half-timbered cottages with stone tiled roofs, and both of which could well have been yeoman's houses. Part of another house is also timber-framed, and within a quarter of a mile there stood, until it was demolished about twenty years ago, a fifth half-timbered cottage. This group of houses, together with some more modern buildings, forms the hamlet of Bondend.

In his description of Upton, Bigland (3) states: There is a place called Bondend in Upton where once stood a farm house and now stands an Alms House (4). In the Subsidy Roll I Edw,iii, among the Tax Payers is John le Bonde, a name denoting servitude. A Deed of manumission by the Abbey of John Donde, is in the Register of Abbot Braunche". There were certainly Bonds living in Upton in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (5). It would seem that the descendants of the freed John became landholders in this detached part of the village which came to be called after them.

A survey, by Edward Hill (6) dated 21 April 1589, and copied in 1718, of the estates of Lord Cobham lists the tenants and described their houses and holdings. These were on the Bondend side of Upton (7). Johanne Bond paid a rent of £1. 15s. 4d. and Ricd. Bond £1. 13s. Od. these amounts are greater than those paid by the majority of tenants, some of whom are described as "Gent". There is a fairly full description of each holding, as for example, of Richard Bond's :-

"... a convenient Dwelling house being built crossways contg 6 Bay 5 thereof Being Lofted tolher Bay being an oxhouse unlofted 2 Barnes Distint contg 6 Romes & one being a wayne house Distint with a hey backside Cherry hey & Orchard adjoining contg per est 2 acr. And one little Close of pasture called ye ffour Rudges ...". There is also reference to: "... one sheepe house & a little Curtillage called Phelpahay ... being a Mesuage the house cont. 2 romes acituate & being between weaver's streem & Pridam's lane" (8).

The various fields are catalogues, some of these being strips in the open fields, and their exact situation is described with some difficulty; thus in Church Field a close: "... called ye hume ... abutting on a Close of psture of himself called ye hurne in the end N.W: on a house built on ye land of Tho. Ockoll on ye side N.E. adjoining to ye highway & on ye side S.W. to land of Rich. Copner". Other fields include a "Close of pasture called Clatterly" and "a Close of psture called Tweenstreet ... abutting on ye highway". These two fields are shown on the Brooke Hunt estate map of c.1850 and are easily identified today. The total area of Richard Bond's land is given as 50 acres.

There are two later references to the Bond family: one appears in an "Abstract of title of Sir B.W. Guise, Bart, and Jno. Phillpots to lands at Upton St. Leonards" (9) dated 1624, referring to an "Indenture between Jno Bond Yeoman of the one part and Tho. Field, Gent, of the other part". The other reference is to an "Inventory of goods and chattels, 27 Mar. 1649 belonging to William Bond 'late of Upton St. Leonards in the County af the City of Gloucester yeoman'" (10). The principal items listed are:

" a flock bedd, fower bolsters, a coverlette, one rug, one payer of blankettes, two pillowes, fower payer of sheets, one dozen and a half of napkins, hand towels, two carpetts, two brass potts, one brass pan, two brasse kettles,

one warming pan, one basting ladle of brasse, one pewter flaggon, pewter drinking cups, one dubble salt of pewter, two pewter candlestiks, one dozen dishes of pewter, spitte one iron dripping pan with iron implements, one Malt Mill halfe a dozen of joyned stools, one long table board, one cupboard & three coffers, one silver spoon, one ladder and lumber". In contrast to the substantial amount of household goods, the number of animals is small, but the heading of the inventory suggests that William Bond had already left Upton and had probably given up active farming.

This is the last reference to the Bonds, although further research may reveal more about them. It is evident that for three or four hundred years the Bond family were yeomen with substantial holdings in this corner of the parish, and the indications are that fifteen to twenty acres of land on the west and steepest side of Nuthill were waste surrounded by arable and pasture land. At the time of the inclosure four open fields Rooksmoor, Stanley Churchfield and Botton Field make a complete semi-circle from the south to the north west; Timberland was to the north, but the gap between it and Bottom Field was filled by four old inclosures. The large gap on the eastern side was broken in the middle by Nuthill common field. Traces of ridge and furrow suggest that in medieval times the patch of waste land was completely surrounded by cultivated fields, and it was on this piece of land that Robert Campbell Esq, built his home.

Archedeacon Scobell in his "Parish Gleanings in Upton St. Leonards", (1905) wrote: "Creed Place ... is said to have been built by a retired grocer from London, Robert Campbell c.1770 to whom the estate was sold by John Guise, Esq. He called the house "Creed Place" after his wife, who was Miss Creed". By 1907, however, in "Letters From Upton St. Leonards" which he composed for the young Birchalls, Archedeacon Scobell stated (11): "I must not forget to tell you about the family of Creed who once lived in your house, after whom it was called Creed Place. When they left Upton they went to Greenwich, and lived there at a house they also named "Creed Place".

There seems to be a slight discrepancy in these two accounts but enquiries show that Robert Campbell was married to Ann Creed, daughter of Sir James Creed of Greenwich who is buried there. In 1799 Robert Campbell took out a lease on property in Greenwich and moved there in 1803 to Park Hall. As Canon Scobell also told the Birchall boys; Ann, the third of Robert Campbell's daughters, married a Lieut.Col Campbell who had been wounded fighting under General Wolfe at Quebec in 1759: he raised the Loyal Greenwich Volunteers during the Napoleonic Wars and died at the age of 90 in 1828 (12).

In 1776 Robert Campbell, Esq., was one of the 33 voters 14 only of whom actually lived in Upton, in an election (13) for a member of Parliament (14). His name also appears in the Land Tax returns (15) for Dudstone and King's Barton Hundred. It is interesting to note that his property is listed as "Creed farm" until 1789 (16), except that in 1784 it is referred to as "Creed Plas". In the year 1786 only, Robert Campbell himself was one of the three Commissioners for the Hundred. After 1789 it would seem that Campbell was beginning to build up the estate: Seat Burrows, Clatter Leaze, part of Loaders, Claytons, The Rans are all named, but at the same time that Creed Farm became Creed Place the house and fields were let to various tenants - 1789 to B. Long, in 1791 to Mumbee Goulborn, Esq., in 1792 and 1793 to Richard Land and from 1794 to 1798 to William Greening.

A manuscript survey of the estate (17) in 1792 gives a more complete picture. The tenants are listed with a description of their holdings, both in the open fields and in severalty, three being marked with an asterisk referring to a marginal note: "N.B. The Grounds marked thus are haind at Candlemas Commonal Opentale" i.e. originally fenced for the admission of cattle on common fields.

The twelve tenants listed are: Mr. Henry Frankis, Mr. Rodway, Mr. Turner, Mr. Wells, Mr. Morris, Mr. Abel, Mr. Browning, Mr. Cook, Mr. Bishop, William Smith and Mr. Whitcombe. Their holdings vary in size from the 57 acres 3 roods 10 perch of Mr. Frankis to Mr. W. Whitcombe's 16 perch; and rents vary from £76 to £1. Some of these include a house and orchard, or house only. Two are described as follows:

"No. 10 William Smith (Lifehold)
Cottage and Garden 0a 1r Op
Wm Smith holds this by Courtesy for his own
and his Wife's Life they are both Aged near 80.

No.11 William Whitcombe Tenant
Cottage and Garden 0a Op 16p
N.B. This is at Rack Rent" (18)

Robert Campbell's own land "In Hand" amounted to 56a 1r Op valued at £247 per annum; the whole estate including this, amounting to 220a 1r 20p: but rents paid out came to £22. 10s. 1d. leaving a total annual income of £446. 19s. 11d. "Including Furniture estimated at £70 p.ann". This brings us to another difficulty as the 56 acres 1 rood of Mr. Campbell's land "In Hand", rent £248 has a note beside it "As Let to Mr. Long, including the Furniture".

There is therefore some uncertainty about the early tenancy of Creed Place. It was evidently built by Robert Campbell who owned it for thirty years. The Land Tax returns for Upton for 1799 and 1800 are missing, but in 1801 the owner and occupier are given as Thos. Jefferis, Esq.

Archdeacon Scobell (19) having described Robert Campbell, and Creed Place, continues: "A Mr. Powell once owned it, and carried on some amateur handicraft, his forge and workshop are still remembered. He was an East Indian Planter, and had negro servants ... It was said that he made jewels for the then Prince of Wales and could not obtain his money. He went to law with the Government, losing his suit and his house. Mr. Jefferies, an eminent London goldsmith, followed ..."

This implies that Mr. Powell owned Creed Place after Robert Campbell but it seems unlikely that the estate was bought, occupied and sold within the two years 1799 & 1800 for which there are no land tax records. It would seem that the estate was let to Mr. B. Long 1788-1789, no record for 1790, to Mumbee Goulborn 1791, to Richard Land 1792-1793, to Mr. Greening, 1794-1796, to Mr. Witcomb Laves (?) 1797, to Mr. Greening 1798; then is the gap until Thos. Jeffreys in 1801. This incredible list from the tax returns is complicated by the entry in the Creed Place survey of 1792, stating that Creed Place, "including the furniture " was let to Mr. Long". Thomas Jeffreys is listed as the owner and occupier of Creed Place in the Land Tax returns from 1801 to 1812, paying annually £4. 14s. 6d. It is interesting to note that eleven landowners paid more, not only families like the Snells, but the farmers at Lower Farm, Kymsbury Farm, Actons Farm and Gastrells.

According to Archdeacon Scobell, after Mr. Jefferies came Madame Rucker, "who built a School in the garden, where the coachman's cottage now stands ... She was succeeded by a Miss Whisker from Hartpury. She kept various animals, buffaloes, giraffes etc. in the grounds, Mr. Byles ... also lived there" (20) The tax returns show that by 1821 Mr. J.H. Byles was owner of the estate which consisted of the house, now called Bowden Hall and several fields, some of which were rented. In 1827 Mr. Byles still owned the house, but had let it to D.H. Rucker. Mr. Byles is buried in Upton churchyard where his tombstone records that he died on 23rd January 1837 aged 62.

In the late 19th century additions to Ralph Bigland's Collections it states: "Bowden Hall ... has passed through successive ownership of Campbell, Jeffery, Byles, Vansittart and Hunt. It is now Mr. Dearman Birchall's, and the Estate attached to it very enlarged". The The Tithe Award of 1840 (21) gives the name of the occupier of "Bowden Hall, Lawn, Plantation, Pool etc." as Charles Brooke Hunt, so that Mr. Vansittart's ownership or tenancy must have been short - between 1837 and 1840. The property belonging to Brooke Hunt consisted of fifty fields or plots, more than half being less than an acre in extent; the largest, Aspen Grove, 7a 3r 12p and the smallest a plantation of 5p. Only one field, New Tynning, 6a 19p was described as arable. Five gardens are listed: two of these make up the walled garden which still exists, but now uncultivated. One, 16p in

extent, described as a cottage and garden, let to Saul Organ, may well be the cottage and garden of 16p let to William Whitcombe in 1792 "at a Rack Rent". Brooke Hunt himself is given as the occupier of one house and garden of 1r 0p which may have been the dwelling of the lifeholder William Smith. The third cottage is probably today's Home Farm. The total area of the estate was 109 acres 2 rood and 28 perch.

An estate map of the Bowden Hall estate dating from about 1850 (22) shows the estate much as it was in recent times, including the walled kitchen garden, the grounds and lake, but the small stretch of parkland between the road and the house is shown as "The Orchard" dotted with fruit trees, although a roadway on the lane of the present drive already crosses it. The legend in the top right hand corner reads:

M A P
 OF the Bowden Hall Estate in The
 Parish Of
 UPTON ST. LEONARDS
 and
 COUNTY OF GLOUCESTER
 the property of
 C. BROOKE HUNT ESQre.

and lower down

	A	r	p
Total Acreage	104	3	7
Added Tween Streets	3	1	20
Garness Orchard	3	0	6
Kimberland		2	15
Garden and Orchard to Old Smith's Cottage		1	16

this makes a grand total of 112 acres and 24 perches. Tween Streets was bought of Arthur Rodway 17 March 1848, Garness Orchard and Kimberland from Mrs. Howell. Old Smith's Cottage may have been the half-timbered house referred to earlier.

The estate passed into the hands of the Birchall family who must have added to it considerably as it comprised 512 acres when it was sold in 1925 (23). More research is necessary to record its history in any detail between 1850 and the present day.

References

1. Samuel Rudder, A New History of Gloucestershire (1779). The brick must have been covered with plaster at some subsequent date.
2. Gloucestershire Record Office, P347b/SD1
3. Ralph Bigland, Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections of Gloucestershire, Vol.III (1791)
4. Not identified
5. In 1540, for instance, of eighteen baptisms, four were surnamed Bond. Upton parish register 1539-1678
6. Glos. R.O. P347/MI 1
7. A note in the margin of Glos. R.O. copy reads "Upton St. Leonards alias Barton Upton.
8. Possibly between the Twyver and the "back land" leading from Bondend to Cooper's Hill, but only half-timbered house in this position is too large to be described as two roomed. There are references to Weaver(e) in 1351 and Wyver in 1537: probably from wafer, 'a winding stream'; 'at Wyver' became 'a Twyver'. A.H. Smith, The Place Names of Gloucestershire, Vol.II
9. Gloucester City Library, RV 321.3
10. Gloucester City Library, Ms SX2.3
11. These two articles, were bound together and published in 1921 under the title Records of Upton Leonards. By The Late Ven. E.C. Scobill, Archdeacon of Gloucester, (reprinted by request) together with other Records of the Parish, and three illustrations. There is a forward by Archdeacon Brewster, successor at Upton, Arthur J. Brewster, 1912-1920.
12. Local History and Archives, Blackheath
13. One account gives the total poll as 33, the other as 31 - one vote less for each candidate.
14. Gloucester City Library (H) D8.2 & D9750, An Accurate Copy of The Poll... At the Election Of A Knight of the Shire ... in the Room Of The Present Lord Clifford Begun on Monday May 6 and ended on Friday May 17 1776, Printed And Sold by R. Raikes.
15. Glos.R.O., Q/RE1
16. The Upton returns for 1785 and 1790 are missing.
17. Glos. City Library, RF 321.21 "A Survey of Creed Place Estate ..."
18. E.C. Scobell, Records of Upton St. Leonards (1921) p.24
19. The rent in question was £1 per annum and seems to have been in line with the others: William Smith paid £2. 10s. Od. for his rood and Mr. Cook £8. 8s. Od for his 2 acres which makes it difficult to understand William Whitcombe's £1 being described as a rack rent.

20. E.C. Scobell, Records of Upton St. Leonards (1921)
p.24. "His daughter, Marianne Caroline Byles, married
Mr. Coventry Patmore ... Mr. Bules son wrote an
important book 'Byles on Bills'". Miss Byles was
Patmore's second wife, not "the angel in the house".
21. Glos.R.O., P347a/SD2/1
22. Now in the possession of Mr. H. Cannon of Home Farm.
One field, Garness Close, is inscribed "Bought of
Mrs. Howell 17th March 1846-7 Tithe free". This has
recently been built on.
23. Glos. City Library, sale catalogue, RX321.6