

Chapter 14 : Bold Hall Estate and William Whitacre Tipping, Leoni de Vinci, Maypole Cottages, Cock Fighting, Bold Hall Treasuries

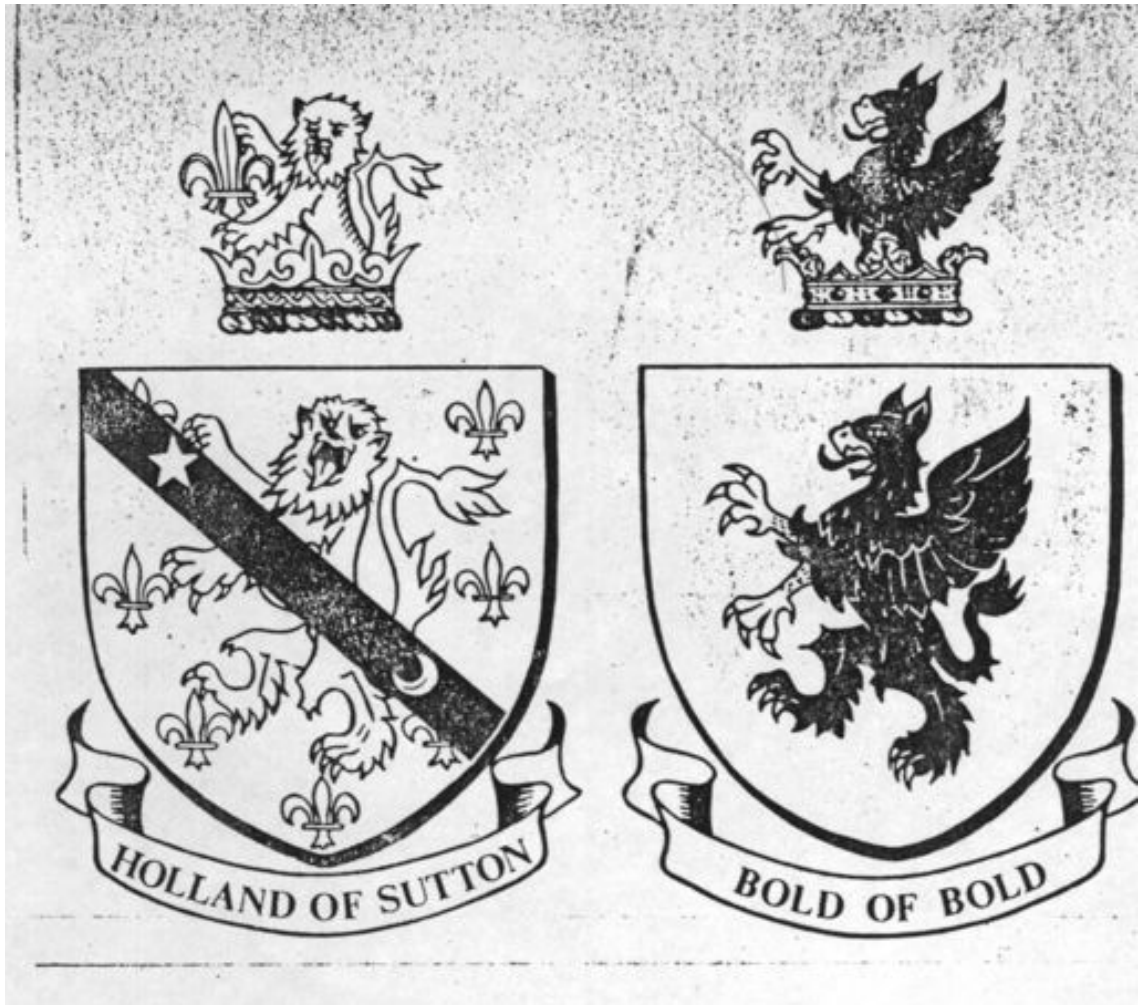
Although I was born and bred in Sutton and have enjoyed great satisfaction in so being, I cannot get away from the fact that Bold in itself has greatly influenced my life, from when I was born, to the present time, over eighty years later. As I have related before, my dad's brother, who was twenty years older than my dad, lived there with my aunt and his family, at Bank House Cottage, Bold. My dad lived there before he was married, due to him being orphaned, and so I travelled up Bold Road as a baby in a pram, until I was able to walk there myself, which I did from an early age. Never a week went by without travelling into Bold. I spent my school holidays there, and, strange to relate and a reflection on these times was that, although Travers Entry and Bold Road was unlit, I never heard of anyone being attacked or molested in any way. Nowadays, you could not allow any small child to walk up there on their own, and adults cannot be sure of not being attacked.

My schooldays were over, and at the age of fourteen, I started work at Bold Colliery as an apprentice joiner in 1924, and worked there until 1940, when I was sent to Burtonwood Aircraft Factory. There, I worked as a fitter in the aircraft propelling division, before I was transferred to Bolton, working on "props" for De Havilands. I mention this because of the fact that I still travelled through Bold to Burtonwood base and, on my motor bike, a Triumph Tiger 350cc, through Bold again to Bolton. I finished my working life at Bold Power Station at the age of 65, having worked there for ten years.

I have described how the Strappers and Battery Cob attracted us Sutton lads, being part of Sutton and Bold, but another attraction was Bold Park, and the stories we heard regarding the ancient place - some were probably mythical, others might have had a degree of truth.

As lads, we could never explore the place as much as we wanted. Many times we were turned back by the people who lived down Hall Lane. They resented us lads walking down there, and it was unsafe to climb over the walls round the park because of the game keepers who kept a wary eye on things, and you never felt like continuing where you would like when a man with a gun confronted you.

The Bold estate itself was fairly extensive, covering some 4,483 acres of land. It was divided by Whittle Brook and, from the north to the west Great Sankey and Camber Wood stood in the south east corner, while in the south was Bold Heath. It was flat and even and the countryside was divided up into pastures, plantations and numerous farms abounded in all parts of the estate. On this heavy clay soil thrived corn, potatoes, cabbages and beans. In the extreme north was Travers Farm, which we knew as Pembertons, and the land on this farm ran to Bold Moss. The Moss was divided from the farm by the Liverpool to Manchester railway. I believe the railway track caused many problems due to having a foundation of peat. Also, the great Stuff Rook at Bold Colliery was found to be adding its great weight to one side of the railway.



Coats of Arms

The Holland Family coat of arms is truly representative of Sutton. The Holland's pedigree is traced from Matthew de Holland, who lived in King John's reign, during which the Magna Carta was signed in 1215.

The Bold Family pedigree dates back to Ricardus de Bold in the reign of King Stephen (1135). The Bolds resided at Bold Hall in Bold Park for nearly 700 years, until 1859, when the Hall and Parklands were sold.

The Bolds of Bold Hall were, for centuries, the overlords and owners of tracts of land in Sutton, and one example of this was the gift of land to accommodate the building of St. Nicholas', the church at the highest point of New Street. We knew this as Top Church, to distinguish it from All Saints in Ellamsbridge Road.

The Bolds also governed the production of coal in and around Sutton and transfers of all kinds of land. Another instance of this was the decision to move the copper smelting works at Abbotsfield Road to Ravenhead, although Mr. Tipping was responsible for this. Still, he was the owner of Bold Hall and the estates.

The earliest record of Bold was in the year 1212, in the reign of Henry II, when the Saxon called Tuger the Elder held the land we call Bold. He was succeeded by Adam de Bold, although the pedigree of the Bolds commenced with Ricardus de Boldin the reign of Stephen (1135-1154). What connection there was between Tuger the Elder and the Bolds, I cannot say, nor how the land came to the Bolds (sometimes called de Biilds). Perhaps the domination of the Norman rule had something to do with it. And so the Bolds lived in the Bold Park right from 1222, when Tuger the Elder died in the old Hall, for 400 years, until Richard Bold rebuilt Bold Hall in 1616.

In 1730, the Bolds engaged Leoni de Vincent, the great Italian artist, to design a new hall for them. The fireplace was made of marble from Hadrian's Villa, and the interior was built on classical lines, and pictures and vestments of great value were installed.

The Bold family collections with Bold passed to Henry Hoghton in 1824 who, by royal licence, took the name Henry Bold Hoghton. He belonged to another old Lancashire family from Hoghton Tower, but within 35 years, the Hall and all estates were sold. The year was 1860 when William Whitaker Tipping, a wealthy but eccentric Horwich mill owner, bought the Bold Hall and properties and estate for £120,000.

Before Tipping moved in, there was a snag. The great collection of books in the library was not included in the price, and he was invited to make a bid for them. He was quoted as saying "I am not a bookman, but I know something about muck, and I will give you muck price for them." The books were loaded onto a cart and weighed, and he bought them for 10/- a ton - fifty pence in our new reckoning.

Once William Tipping moved into the Hall, he decided to use only four rooms, and it was rumoured he kept buckets or hesian sacks of mildewed sovereigns there. As lads, we believed the sovereigns lay somewhere around the estate. If they were ever found, no-one knows.

Tipping's main hobby or pleasure was the breeding and sport of cockfighting. What is left of the pits is still there. I believe the spectators and Squire Tipping, as he was called, sat on bales of straw around the pits. It was said that half a thousand birds were kept there for the purpose of cockfighting. He was also reported to take £1,000 with him to the Tipping Arms, but if this is true, and they were sovereigns, they would be heavy in his pockets, so this story could be exaggerated.

Squire Tipping died in 1889, but his eccentric habits caused quite a lot of amused comments, and one such story follows.

Every Friday, Squire Tipping would be driven by his coachman to Wigan Market, passing by Bank House Cottages and calling at the Pear Tree Hotel at Collins Green for a drink, while he left his coachman outside, looking after the coach and horses.

Twenty nine years after he bought Bold Hall, William Tipping died. It was 1889 and he was to be interred at Horwich, and the self same coachman took the body in the coach from the Hall. He took the same route, passing my uncle's (my uncle was now 35 years old and my dad 16) and called at the Pear Tree Hotel, but this time it was a different story. The coachman went in for a drink, and left the deceased William Tipping outside in the coach. It was reported that the coachman said to Dick Naylor, the landlord "Every dog has its day. The old so and so left me outside for many a year and I bet he never wanted a drink half as badly as he does this morning."

Squire Tipping died intestate, and the whole estate was left to a Mrs. Wyatt of Hampshire. Ten years later, she sold the Bold estate to a syndicate called Bold Hall Estate Ltd. The art treasures were sold and most went to America. Indeed, at one time, you could see where the wall had been broken down and later repaired. Through the wall was laid a railway track, and railway vans were used to transport some of the weighty treasures. I believe two stone fireplaces were transferred to Meols Hall, Southport. Bold Hall itself was pulled down in 1936.

It is said that the Park boasted the finest oak trees in the country, and that Squire Tipping had them cut down and sold the timber. Regarding his favourite pastime of cockfighting, Queen Victoria banned it during her reign, but I doubt whether it affected the eccentric Squire Tipping. I saw a picture of him once. He looked a formidable character, with his thick mop of grey hair and large spade beard.

And so now back to the time when I was a lad among other lads. Making our way up Abbotsfield, passing on our left Abbotsfield House and walking down Gorse Lane, leaving May Pole Farm behind on our right. Again on the left, down their drive, was Abbotsfield Farm, and then we approached Maypole Cottages, which have now vanished, and turned right into Hall Lane, just a cinder cart track.

Continuing down the lane, we came to Dog Kennel Cottage, with this particular inscription in stone on the wall of the cottage (see next page) And then you could turn in, if you were allowed, to the Manor House Farm and more cottages.

At the end of the lane was another cottage, in which old Nanny Redhead lived. If she spotted us, she would give us a rough time with her dog, and she herself could be quite fierce. In her garden was a large goat, and she also fed a large buck rat, which would appear if she called it. She was a well-known character, and lived the life of a recluse at the bottom of the lane, barring us lads at times, the right of way. This bottom part of the lane was called the Ladies' Walk, and the pond to the left named on maps the Fish Pond, we called the Ladies' Pond.

Leaving Nanny Redhead's cottage, you bent left, and still following the narrow road, you would sight the Dog Kennel Plantation on the left hand side, and continuing, you would come to the site of the cock fighting pits.

The Kennel Cottage, built around 1732, was the home of the Hound Master, and the kennels were built on both sides of it; one side for the dogs, the other for the bitches, to keep them segregated. On the kennel cottage front wall an inscription, in German, was cut into the stonework:

Denn Gotte, zorn vom Himmel word offenbart uber alles gotttidge wedim und ungarech Tigkeit der Menschen.

I copied this down, and translated from the German, it reads:

God's anger from heaven will be revealed over all godless beings and the injustice of people."

This prayer was also carved on a tree in the Bold Wood. This leads me to believe the carvings on both cottage and the tree in the wood were the work of German Prisoners of War in the Second World War (1939-1945). Several groups of prisoners worked around the Bold district at that time, mainly German and Italian. I remember them clearing out and deepening the ditches around that area. You could recognise them by the large, yellow circular disks sewn into the backs of their tunics. They mainly worked around the farmland, helping the farmers, and seemed quite a contented lot of men. When I took the copy of the German prayer to Meini and her Dutch mother, they produced two medallions with the self-same inscription on them, together with a picture of the German priest Goetheolich which she wore around her neck during a serious illness when she was quite young.

My earliest recollection of visiting Bold Park goes back to the year 1915 or 1916, when I was with my cousin Nellie Bamber. She always appeared to me as a grown up, being, as she was, roughly twelve years older than me, She was proficient as a dressmaker. She visited quite a lot of people around Bold, and, for company when I was staying at her home, she took me sometimes. On occasions, this was for social visits, other times it was to do with her dressmaking. I can remember going to the sandstone built North Lodge, at the extreme north of Bold Park, and going through the large iron gates which faced Neill's Row, and being received with Nellie, and having a cup of tea and a biscuit. However, the names of the people we visited have evaded me after all these years.

I also visited farm houses with her. Sally Ford, who was left running the milk business on her own, was one of Nellie's friends. She lived at Rose Hill Farm, near the iron works of Bold. And then she would take me to Stephenson's small, quaint Crossing Cottage at Broad Lane, Collins Green. Mabel Adamson lived here with her parents. This was the very same cottage and land which my brother, who lived on his own, owned from the 1950s to 1975. Shortly before he died, the cottage was vandalised and burnt down. Then, a visit to Helsby's Farm in Penny Lane to visit Molly Helsby and fit her out with a new dress,. All these visits round Bold were taken on foot, because in those times, buses were non-existent.

Bold Moss : Owd Aincient Moss

Wot 'appened to the Owd aincient Moss?
Tha' wert warm and covered wi flowers so gay.
Wen't slag covered thee, wi all felt thi loss,
Tha wert brown an 'now thar left drab an grey.

Gone was the white and purple heather,
Gone were the birds of every feather,
And paths caressed with thousands of feet
A crime agen nature, it was owt but reet.

We know that scars weer turf was took,
They run from Bold to thowd Moss Nook.
But many a wom tha kept reet warm,
From wintry blasts that spelt us harm.

Us childer, owd Moss, that welcome us there,
To jump thi wide ditches for croddy or dare,
An run carefree across thi ample breast,
An lie close on't thowd mound for grateful rest.

An in't far corner reet opposite Moss Farm,
Hives nestled there we'at bees did swarm.
Busy they were, working all't hours,
To and fro o'ert Moss visiting thowd Moss flowers.

Tha luct lifeless an cowd an grey was landscape,
National Coal Board was responsible for this sad rape.
Tha lay lark this for nigh on twenty years,
Wot could one do, only shed silent tears.

So awaken owd Moss from a score years of sleep
A full circle as turned, now new flowers will peep,
An thi paths will appear where grasses brush wi knee,
And bird song will be heard and the humming of the bee.

So now aincient Moss tha con live once again,
Wi seeds sown to grow, under sunshine and rain.
Thar't grateful to all who took such a measure,
Thal bring forth to young and old most wonderful pleasure.

Frank Bamber