

Photo 4.07

J. George Graves at work in his office. He owned Riverdale House for four decades, and has been described as Sheffield's greatest benefactor.



Marianne Firth (Charles's second wife, born 1853) remained in Riverdale with the family (and a second husband) for several years, before the house was bought in 1902 by John George Graves (1866-1945). Known by his family and friends as George, he was born in the

Lincolnshire village of Horncastle, moving with his family to Heckmondwike in West Yorkshire in 1874. After becoming an apprentice watch-maker in Sheffield in 1880, he started business on his own in 1886. By 1903, he had more than 2,000 staff in a mail-order business, selling watches, jewellery, cutlery, electro-plated items, clothing, furniture and other goods³⁰.

George Graves and his family lived at Riverdale up to his death in 1945, apart from a period (1908-1915) in a smaller property in Beauchief when he rented out Riverdale to cope with temporary business difficulties. He was an active Methodist and a supporter of the Young Men's Christian Association, the Salvation Army and similar bodies; he became a magistrate, a city councillor, an alderman, the city's lord mayor (in 1926), a freeman of the city (1929) and a town trustee (1933). Sometimes described as Sheffield's greatest benefactor, he was generous in transferring his wealth to others, in part through the J. G. Graves Charitable Trust established in 1930 (and still active) whose income came originally from profits of his company. For example, he purchased and donated the 206-acre Graves Park (from 1926), financed part of the cost of Ecclesall Woods (1927), and provided the Graves Art Gallery in Surrey Street (1934)³¹.

After J. G. Graves's death in 1945, Riverdale was occupied by his daughter, Ruth, and her husband, Stanley Drummond-Jackson, before being taken over for offices by Brown Bayley Steels Ltd. around 1955. The present apartment complex in the grounds, known as Riverdale Park, was built in the mid-1970s.

5. Endcliffe Hall

1865 also saw the opening of Sheffield's grandest residence of the period. Endcliffe Hall (5 on Map 4.01) was the new home of John Brown and his wife, providing opulent splendour in a landscaped estate of some 35 acres.

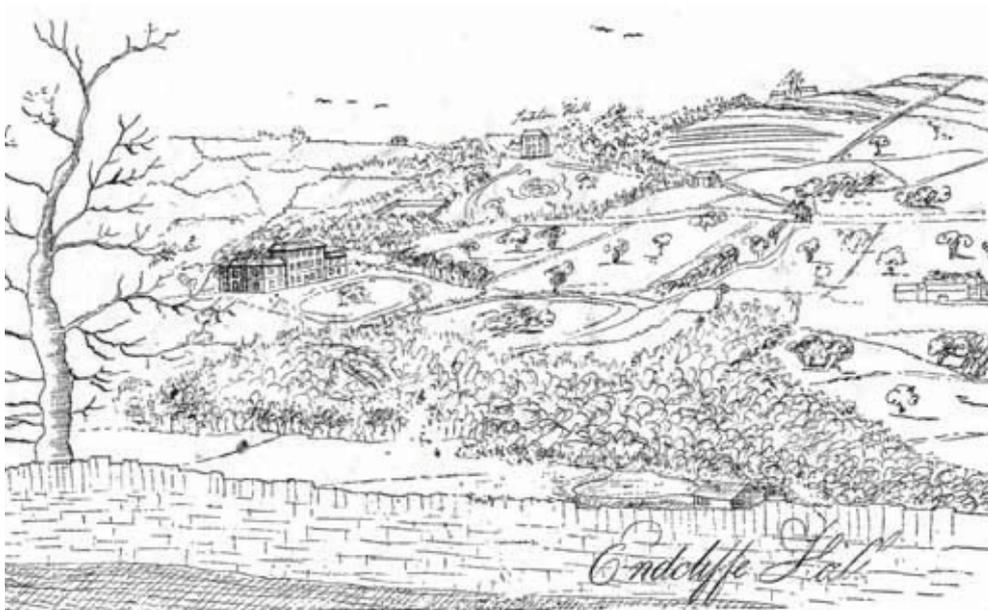
Like many other wealthy Sheffielders of the time, John Brown (1816-1896) came from quite modest surroundings; his father was a slater living in Favell's Yard off Fargate. However, he achieved much more than most. An obituary in 1896 (*Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 27 December) noted that his career was "practically the career of Sheffield for the past half century, and it is not too much to say that in the making of that history he played a larger and more distinguished



Drawing 4.02
This sketch of John Brown was published in the Illustrated London News of July 1867, soon after he had been knighted by Queen Victoria.

part than any other man of his time". The obituary described "how by his energy and enterprise he brought new industries to the town which found employment for thousands; how, when most actively engaged as an inventor and manufacturer in building up a colossal business, he found time to serve the town of his birth as a councillor and alderman, as mayor and master cutler³², as magistrate and town trustee, and later on as chairman of the School Board, and in other ways; and how at the same time he took the keenest and most generous interest in all movements having for their object the improvement - socially, morally, and religiously - of the people".

After a six-year apprenticeship, having left school at 14, John Brown set up on his own at the age of 21 in 1837, making and selling cutlery, tools and similar items; he is also recorded as a "steel converter and refiner" in that year. By 1844 he had moved into the production of steel files and railway springs. A first major commercial success came after his invention (1848) and active promotion of coiled spring buffers for railway coaches and vans, to replace the very uncomfortable chain links used until then.



Drawing 4.03
An 1808 sketch by surveyor William Fairbank of an earlier Endcliffe Hall viewed from the south. The Hall is the large building in the centre-left of the picture, with Fulwood Road running from left to right behind it. An earlier Tipton Hall is in the background at the top of Shore Lane

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Advert 4.02

Armour plate is prominently offered in this 1879 Sheffield directory advertisement, although the number of its potential purchasers in the town was presumably not large

CHAPTER FOUR



Photo 4.08
Endcliffe Hall was created by steel-maker John Brown on the south side of Fulwood Road in 1864-1865. It is now occupied by the Territorial Army.

With a wide range of other products and through the development of innovative equipment and processes, John Brown and Company expanded through the 1850s, opening the Atlas Steel and Spring Works in Savile Street, Brightside in 1856. Originally on a site of less than three acres, the works expanded more than tenfold in subsequent decades. Armour plating designed and made by the company proved to be more effective against the impact of shells than any made by the navy's own dockyards, and warship plate sales in the 1860s were very substantial. That was also the case with the company's newly developed steel railway lines. By the mid-1860s, the firm had more than 3,000 employees³³.

As illustrated in the obituary above, John Brown was also active in public affairs³⁴. He was knighted in 1867. His business and public activities brought him into contact with influential people both in Sheffield and in national and government circles, and early in the 1860s he set about creating a new house that

reflected his position in society and his enjoyment of fine things.

In 1863, living in Nether Edge³⁵, he bought an estate of open fields from



Photo 4.09
Endcliffe Hall's Grand Conservatory was more than 50 yards long. It was demolished in the 20th century.

Henry Wilkinson on the south side of Fulwood Road, next to the newly constructed Oakbrook House (above)³⁶. On the estate was an earlier Endcliffe Hall which appears from Drawing 4.03 (1808) to have been quite substantial, facing towards the south-east³⁷. The old Hall was immediately demolished, and architects Flockton³⁸ and Abbott designed a new property (Photo 4.08) that would be suitable for large-scale entertaining as well as for everyday living. With 36 rooms, the style was described as “French in the Italian manner”, and it was built, decorated and furnished largely by local craftsmen³⁹. The Hall’s scale and flamboyance were unusual in a town where visible extravagance was usually treated with some suspicion.

The ground floor contained an entrance vestibule, a conservatory, a ballroom/saloon (also serving as a gallery for the family’s pictures, and the site for an organ powered by water from a reservoir in the grounds), a library, dining, drawing and morning rooms, kitchen facilities, and (at mezzanine level) servants’ rooms. On the first floor, reached by a wide staircase and gallery, were nine bedrooms and additional servants’ quarters. A tower provided space for a billiard room and observatory.

The estate itself, with entrance lodges and cottages, stretched from Fulwood Road in the north to Riverdale Road in the south (constructed largely by John Brown in 1863-1864). As well as two glass summer houses and a “boarded cattle shed”, it included the Grand Conservatory, which was more than 50 yards long and topped by a central dome (Photo 4.09). This faced a raised Italian garden next to an ornamental lake and more gardens. Behind the Hall (towards Fulwood Road) was a walled kitchen garden, vinery, greenhouses and laundry rooms, as well as a coach-house for 10 carriages, stables and a “farmery”. This contained a cow-house for four cows, stalls for horses, a piggery, a blacksmith’s shop, and buildings for corn-crushing and other tasks. The lower section of the grounds was landscaped and richly wooded⁴⁰.

This was a fine setting for John Brown and his wife to entertain guests and to enjoy on their own. Since they had no children, most occupants of the house were servants. In the 1881 census, those included a housekeeper, two housemaids, a ladies’ maid, a kitchen maid, a cook and a footman. Within the grounds were also housed, with their families, a head gardener, two other gardeners, an undergardener and a coachman. Near the end of that census year Mary Brown

Print 4.02
Illustrated post-cards were immensely popular early in the 20th century. Here the war-wounded patients in Endcliffe Hall Hospital around 1917 could encourage recipients to dispatch letters and parcels to be delivered by their postman “mascot”.



died, and Sir John came to spend increasingly long periods in the south of England. At the time of the 1891 census he was in a lodging-house in Torquay, and soon after that he left Sheffield completely, dying in 1896⁴¹.

By 1892, it had been decided to sell Endcliffe Hall and its contents. It was offered to the Town Council for about half its original cost, suggested to be suitable for “a hospital, infirmary, convalescent home, asylum, orphanage, technical college, or public park, with museum and library”. However, the Council were already overburdened with demands on their funds, and the offer was declined.

The contents of the Hall, stables and other buildings were put up for sale in 1893, ranging in a five-day auction across more than 1,500 items but yielding only a modest return. Two years later, the buildings and land were bought for property development by local businessmen forming the Endcliffe Estates Company⁴². New roads were constructed in the south of the estate (Endcliffe Grove, Hall and Park Avenues), and about 20 houses had been built on those by 1905. The Hall itself was made available for renting for social events and exhibitions, but interest was limited. By 1913, it was proposed to demolish the Hall and outbuildings in order to make space for more new homes.

At this point, the West Riding Territorial Force Association offered to buy it as headquarters of the Fourth (Hallamshire) Volunteers. That purchase (with the recently-reduced area of land) was completed in 1914. The Hall was used as a hospital for military casualties later in World War One (Print 4.02), and has since then been occupied by different elements of the Territorial Army Reserve. The structure remains largely as it was, but modifications have included conversion of the stables and coach-house into a general-purpose hall and demolition of the Grand Conservatory; the Hall was completely surveyed and refurbished in 1997-1998.

6. Thornbury

In the same period as Endcliffe Hall was being planned, another leading merchant-manufacturer was arranging for his new house to be built on the other side of Fulwood Road (6 on Map 4.01). Frederick Thorpe Mappin⁴³ (1821-1910)



Photo 4.10
Seen here around 1885, Frederick Thorpe Mappin, creator of Thornbury, was very influential in Sheffield and as a Member of Parliament.

had since 1859 been the senior partner of steelmakers Thomas Turton and Sons. Before then he had worked for some 20 years in the family cutlery firm (founded by his father Joseph in 1810 and from 1851 called Mappin Brothers), creating one of the largest in Sheffield. Travelling widely on behalf of the company, he had built up international as well as national trade⁴⁴.

Frederick Thorpe Mappin (Photo 4.10) was very successful in his business affairs. He had been master cutler in 1855, and by 1863 he was also a director of the Sheffield Gas Company, being appointed its chairman ten years later. He later became president of the File Manufacturers' Association, and from 1869 director of the Midland Railway Company. In public affairs, he had been a town councillor