

# Ranmoor Society News

June 2014

## Ranmoor's Military Hospitals at the Time of the Great War

Our last newsletter included a 1915 *Sheffield Telegraph* article about the evacuation of children from Nether Green School, when the boys were transferred to the Parish Room at the bottom of Ranmoor Road and the girls to Ranmoor Methodist Schoolroom in Chapel Terrace. This was because the building was needed as a hospital for military patients. As this year sees the centenary of the start of Great War, it is appropriate to recall some of the many ways in which Ranmoor and Sheffield were changed by it.

In fact more than thirty new hospitals were created in the city by converting schools and large properties, and across these four years some 60,000 wounded and sick servicemen were cared for. Ranmoor provided three of these hospitals – in Nether Green School (then “Ranmoor Council School”), in Endcliffe Hall and in Oakbrook.

**Nether Green Hospital** was opened in October 1915 with 110 beds. It treated a variety of patients although not all of them had been injured by direct enemy action; overall, around half the soldiers sent to UK for treatment were defined as “sick” rather than “wounded”.



The photograph shows that eye injuries were common. It also illustrates patients' “going out” clothes; many convalescing men were allowed to spend days outside their hospital, wearing a light-blue uniform with white lapels and a red tie.

Sheffield citizens (especially women) worked hard to provide activity and refreshment for hundreds of servicemen each day. Canteens were opened in several areas, benches were provided on the city's streets, and groups were entertained for instance in games of bowls or angling expeditions and at concerts given by amateur performers of all kinds. Newspapers

report that many a “capital tea” was enjoyed.

For each hospital groups of volunteers worked to improve the lives of patients. For instance, the “Nether Green Soldiers' Breakfast Fund” was created in December 1915 to provide for soldiers in the Ranmoor Council School, and in the previous month the (separate) “Nether Green Hospital Tobacco Fund” had started work. (At the time, “smokes” were considered essential for good health.) The city-wide “Personal Comforts Depot” delivered thousands of breakfasts and teas to supplement hospitals' more basic meals, and local school-children brought in eggs, fruit, vegetables and other items.

In 1916 **Endcliffe Hall** was converted to provide Ranmoor's second military hospital. Eight wards were created, including one of thirty-two beds in the ballroom. The Hall's large glass conservatory was used as an open-air ward and for this its glass roof had to be removed (and was never replaced). The new hospital was staffed by nurses and supporting workers with a visiting doctor.



Next door to Endcliffe Hall, **Oakbrook** in the spring of 1917 became a hospital for around fifty officers. It had been offered rent-free to the War Office, and furniture and equipment were funded through a special appeal by the Lord Mayor to local firms and individual businessmen. When these and other hospitals were returned to civilian use in 1919, details of their temporary usage gradually slipped from everyday memory.

## The World's Second Oldest Football Club.

At our May meeting Phil Farnsworth described the historical background to Hallam Football Club. We were intrigued to learn that this club, founded in Sandygate Road in 1860, can claim not only to be the world's second oldest football club but that the ground they play on is the world's oldest.

Although Sheffield Football Club takes the supreme title, it was two of its entrepreneurial members- Thomas Vickers, the steel magnate, and John Shaw, a solicitor's clerk, both with strong Ranmoor

connections – who formally founded Hallam F.C. only three years later, when Sheffield F.C. played a scratch team at the Sandygate ground on Boxing Day 1860.

The early 19th century game of football was not in any way standardised and was mainly played in public schools, universities or military barracks. It was then essentially a game for “gentlemen” rather than for “working men”. Teams had their own rules, with many playing a sort of rugby, and on occasions a game was played to one side’s rules until half-time when the rules were changed to then favour the other side. This chaotic situation was made worse by the size of pitch (some were up to 200 or 300 yards long), the length of the game (up to three hours) and the number of players fielded (often between 11 and 16). It wasn’t until 1871 that the goal crossbar was introduced and removed the need for an adjudicator to decide whether a goal should be allowed or not.

Phil Farnsworth finished his talk with an absolute “tour de force” by suddenly producing from under his seat the Youdan Cup, a trophy in the form of a claret jug with the winner’s name, Hallam F.C., engraved on it. Mr Tom Youdan, Sheffield publican and music-hall impresario, offered it in 1867 as a trophy to be played for in a one-off Challenge Cup competition between the fifteen or so clubs that had formed the Sheffield Football Association (some four years before the F.A. came up with the idea). The final was played at Bramall Lane on 5th March 1867 and the team which carried it off was none other than Hallam F.C. Somehow the cup was then lost to view for over a century until it was discovered in an antique dealer’s shop in Edinburgh in 1997!



Thanks to their name engraved on it Hallam F.C learned about the cup, and, as it represented an integral part of their history, paid the £2000 to regain this important memento. You may perchance have seen it displayed several years ago on the B.B.C’s Antiques Roadshow. At that time the club was recommended to insure it for £20,000!

## “Sheffield’s Greatest Benefactor”

Graves Park and the Graves Art Gallery are just two of a huge legacy of bequests made to our city by a remarkable philanthropist. His amazing life was illustrated by Mike Spick at our February meeting.

John George Graves (1866-1945) is directly relevant to Ranmoor. For almost all the period between 1902 and his death he lived with his family at Riverdale House, a large home originally built for Charles Henry Firth.

J. G. Graves was born in the Lincolnshire village of Horncastle, and at the age of eight moved with his family to Heckmondwike. At fourteen he became an apprentice watch-maker in Sheffield, and started business on his own in Howard Street only six years later. Whilst travelling to nearby towns to expand his trade he recognised the potential of postal selling, and became one of the first to offer mail-order purchases though a small deposit and monthly payments. (His English Lever Watch, advertised at 50 shillings, could be bought for a down-payment of five shillings and then ten monthly instalments also of five shillings.)

In 1903, with support from national newspapers he won a long battle with the Post Office about their previous refusal to pick-up his registered packages. His firm expanded to send out more than a quarter of a million orders each month; by then it was manufacturing as well as selling. Its 27 different buildings and 2,000 staff were brought together in that year into Westville, on the site now occupied by the University of Sheffield’s Octagon Centre. The photograph shows the company’s Division Street building c.1900.



George Graves was an active Methodist and a supporter of the Y.M.C.A., the Salvation Army and similar bodies; he became a magistrate, a city councilor, an alderman, the city’s Lord Mayor (in 1926), a freeman of the city (1929) and a town trustee (1933).

He has been described as Sheffield’s greatest benefactor. In 1930 he established the (still active) J. G. Graves Charitable Trust with income generated from his company’s profits. 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). Other gifts to the city included Concord Park (1929), Blacka Moor (1933), Dronfield’s Cliffe Park (1934), land for Tupton Court Nurses’ Home (1934), Beauchief Garden and what became the Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet (1935), extensions to the Children’s Hospital (1935) and to the Mappin Art Gallery (in Weston Park, 1937), sections of the Sheffield Round Walk (1938), Forge Dam (1939), a large number of playgrounds for children, sports-grounds and public areas, no less than 230 homes for elderly people, several hospital facilities, and hundreds of donations to smaller projects. Astonishing!

### Ranmoor Society Committee 2014

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