

Subscriptions!

The bad news is that annual subscriptions are due again. The good news is that they remain unchanged for next year (at £8.00 and £10.00). We hope that you still feel that this is good value even if you can't always get to the meetings. Please return the attached slip promptly to our membership secretary to remain on the Society's mailing list and to receive a membership card with details of meetings throughout 2018.

Rivelin Valley's Industrial Heritage

When you walk along the Rivelin Valley today, you can see little evidence of an industrial past. Yet even into the early twentieth century there were some twenty working mills, workshops and forges, concentrated in a three-and-a-half-mile stretch upstream of Malin Bridge. Trades included the grinding and finishing of blades, papermaking, corn milling, lead smelting, anvil forging and wire drawing. In fact there was an almost continuous strip of wheels and dams along the valley, usually linked by paths, bridle roads and cart tracks connecting the workshops to local settlements and to Sheffield. There was no road along the valley until 1908, when a "New Road", Rivelin Valley Road, was constructed.

Most of the mills were built after 1700 (relatively late for Sheffield), although records for Hind Wheel date back to 1581. It was engaged in cutlery grinding and, later on, the manufacture of steel strip for ladies' corsets. By 1794, Hind Wheel was employing twelve men and ran ten grinding troughs, but after expansion in the 1820s two new huge waterwheels were each serving eight troughs. It continued working until the 1920s.

Nearest to Malin Bridge, Geogram Wheel dates from around the 1620s. This was said to be the largest in the valley, with sixteen troughs for grinding cutlery, files and sickles, and for finishing anvils and hammers produced at the Mousehole Forge next door. It ceased operating in 1933.

Mousehole Forge dates from the same period. The site originally contained two lead mills, which by 1664 had been converted into an iron forge producing iron bars from blast furnace pig iron. At the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Forge's anvils had become world famous, for which the firm was awarded a gold medal. It also closed in 1933, but after becoming derelict has since been partially restored and has now been designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument by English Heritage.

At the other end of the valley, the Rivelin Corn Mill and a small hamlet were located on the site of the

current Rails Road car park. Originally owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury, this was the valley's only mill which solely ground corn. It was still working in the 1920s, and not demolished until about 1950.

Many of the wheels had descriptive names. Sometimes they were called after their early owners (Spooner, Hind and Swallow), and others used their location (Hollins Bridge, Walkley Bank). As steam power gradually replaced water power, industrial activity moved out of the valleys into the city. The last water-powered mill along the Rivelin was Nether Cut Wheel, which continued scythe-grinding until 1939. With the help of electricity, Walkley Bank Tilt lasted until the early 1950s. It became increasingly difficult to find tenants for small industrial units away from the city, and as wheels fell into disrepair demolition sadly followed for safety reasons. Now woodland has reclaimed the previously busy areas, and the Rivelin Valley can be enjoyed for strolling and watching its resident birds.

Ranmoor Before 1879

Up until 1879 when St John's church was first consecrated, Ranmoor's only place of worship was the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel in Upper Ranmoor. The original chapel built in 1783 figures prominently on the 1791 Enclosure Map drawn up by William Fairbank – one of the earliest indications we have of how Ranmoor looked at the end of the 18th century. On that map we can also see a terrace of cottages (now Chapel Terrace) that housed workers in the local quarry on Ranmoor Cliff. We can spot Chippendale Cottage on Ranmoor Road, and a little further down is a house and croft, now known as Ran Farm.

On the other side of the road, the 1791 map shows buildings, workshops and cottages then referred to collectively as Ranmoor Rise, now numbered 26 to 42 Ranmoor Road. Close to the junction of Ranmoor Road with Fulwood Road was a collection of farm buildings, barns and orchards (since demolished) belonging to Joseph Ibbotson who also owned Ibbotson's Wheel on the River Porter at Nether Green.

The only other buildings visible in 1791 are a homestead on Darwin Lane (later Tapton Farm and since demolished), Snaithing Farm, off Snaithing Lane which was at the time worked by Joshua Worrall, and a cottage and croft on Water (later, Storth) Lane tenanted by scissor-smith John Beal.

The extent to which Ranmoor develops over the next 60 years becomes evident if we inspect the first Ordnance Survey map of 1850. It has hardly changed at all!

Whereas we might guess Ranmoor to have contained 30 or so households at the turn of the century, the 1851 census records only 97 households for the combined area of Ranmoor, Hangingwater and Nether Green.

Most of the buildings on the 1791 map reoccur in 1851, but the addition of two public houses and a couple of shops show that the focus of activity was now moving to Lower Ranmoor. Jonathan Swann had turned his shop and workhouse into a beerhouse called the Highland Lad (later the Bull's Head) and at the same time plied his trade as a pen and pocket knife manufacturer. Along the road George Worrall, member of a family of boot and shoe makers, had opened a beerhouse, soon to become known as the Ranmoor Inn. Cliff Terrace and Cliff View are now marked on the map courtesy of Isaac Deakin who had first purchased the land in 1841 and began the process of building a terrace (Deakin's Walk) and a house and shop for himself from which he ran a grocery business. This is now the West 10 wine bar.

In Ranmoor Rise, George Bowden had by 1850 substantially extended an older stone cottage (now 26 Ranmoor Road) to better reflect his status as 'gentleman', and a small terrace of stone cottages (now 41 to 44 Ranmoor Road) had been built. Higher up Ranmoor Road, we find Cliffe House (82 Ranmoor Road), belonging to pawnbroker James Ashmore has now appeared.

The turning point for Ranmoor's development proved to be the arrival of Mark Firth some ten years later, when he constructed Oakbrook and laid out his 26-acre estate around it. Edward Vickers had already established himself in a new mansion (Tapton Hall) on Shore Lane, and during the 1860s Mark Firth's brothers Charles (Riverdale House) and Edward (Tapton Edge), together with John Brown (Endcliffe Hall), Frederick Mappin (Thornbury), William Howson (Tapton Park), and James Harrison (Tapton Grange), had become residents of Ranmoor – greatly increasing its attractiveness as a place to live.

By now pressure was increasing for a place of worship that suitably reflected the wealth, status and aspirations of Ranmoor's new residents. A new parish was first established, and the location for a new church had to be decided. Cutler James Harrison offered the land adjacent to his Tapton Grange, brewer John Newton Mappin provided much finance, and others paid for bells, fixtures and fittings for St John's Church that opened in 1879. That now splendidly served an expanding residential area that had changed significantly from the rural hamlet represented on the 1791 map.

Frederick Leggoe: Accountant and Cab-Driver

Frederick Edwin Leggoe was a Victorian entrepreneur, whose recklessness led to an early downfall. Born in Attercliffe in 1842, he became an accountant, steel manufacturer and iron and steel merchant. By the time he came to live in Ranmoor, he was active as a property developer where he made a big local impact over the next few years.

Around 1873, he was apparently wealthy enough to purchase the relatively new West Lea in Ranmoor

Park Road (now the Parish Centre), and within two years had acquired the adjacent land. There he built a substantial stable block and possibly the future lodge (now 2 Ranmoor Road) – all before the construction three years later of an imposing mansion he named Ranmoor Grange. Facing Ranmoor Road, the Grange was physically attached to the previously-built stables and now was able to boast its own lodge and driveway. It might appear that Frederick Leggoe had been planning the project well before he acquired the land on which to build it.

Ranmoor Grange was truly a property for a gentleman who had 'made it'. It contained a dining room, drawing room, breakfast room, two large kitchens, six bedrooms, and a billiard room; and outside were the stables, carriage and harness houses, and four greenhouses warmed with water.

But Frederick Leggoe hadn't 'made it' for long. He had borrowed substantial sums of money for his building projects, including in Ranmoor the new Marr Terrace, originally known as Market Place. Poor economic conditions arrived in the late 1870s, and in 1879 he was forced to offer the Grange, Lodge and other properties and land for sale. In 1881, he was declared bankrupt with liabilities of £25,000 – a huge amount at the time.

Leaving Ranmoor, his family now transferred to Heeley before setting up home in Matlock Bath. Ever the entrepreneur, he acquired many sources of income – operating a roller-skating rink (popular at the time), a horse-cab business, and the Promenade Restaurant. Curiously, the 1901 census shows him in London, described as a 'Salvation Army officer'. He also worked as a 'house agent and accountant' for several years.

Frederick Leggoe appears to have been a colourful character. Whilst in Ranmoor, he had frequent arguments about land and property with the new resident of West Lea, and in 1880 he was sued by his father to recover a loan of nearly £600. In 1883 (described as a 'boarding-house keeper' in Matlock Bath) he was charged with 'causing a number of fowls to be cruelly treated' as they were transported by train to Sheffield, and in 1891 he was fined for touting for business as a cab-driver.

Nevertheless, he was elected a member of Matlock Bath Urban District Council in the early 1900s, and seems to have been well-known in the town. Affection for a more prosperous earlier life led to the name of his final property in the Derbyshire town – 'West Lea', his first Ranmoor house in which the Society now holds its meetings.

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