

The Stead Family of Snaithing Farm

At our October meeting we welcomed Anne and Stuart Barrett who once again were able to include a presentation in their annual visit to Derbyshire. Anne's ancestors the Steads and the Creswicks lived and farmed here during the late 18th and 19th centuries, and their recent research gave us a glimpse of the lives of the occupants of Snaithing Farm during this period: a fascinating story that has added significantly to our knowledge of the Ranmoor area.

The history of Snaithing Farm can be traced back through a succession of owners and tenants from 1377, when Alice Agays paid a yearly rent of 2/6d for Agasscroft, through 1447 when a William Stickbuck farmed a 2.5 acre plot known as Snayth Ing. In 1824, Joseph Stead entered the picture when he assumed the tenancy of the property, then known as Snaithing House. His parents had moved down to Sheffield from North Yorkshire and had settled in Crookes back in 1788, probably attracted by the growing opportunities afforded by the industrial revolution.

Initially, both their sons Joseph and Thomas steered clear of farming, which had been in the doldrums, and opted for the more lucrative trade of grinding after serving their apprenticeships. However, farming had remained in Joseph's blood. In his late thirties in 1824, he took over the tenancy of Snaithing Farm and its 13 acres – although still continuing as a grinder. He worked at the Ibbotson Wheel in Endcliffe Woods during which time in 1838 this mill was reported to have suffered "rattening". By 1866 when Joseph retired, aged 80 after 42 years as tenant of Snaithing Farm, he had given up his grinding work to concentrate on farming his 30 acres and on his work as a burgess for Upper Hallam.



Joseph and his wife Mary raised four children here, Henry, Ann, George and Elizabeth. His eldest daughter, Ann, married John Creswick, a farmer from Sandygate in 1833. It was one of their sons, (another Joseph pictured here) who maintained the family connection by taking over the tenancy of Snaithing Farm as a young 28 year old, when his grandfather sold up and retired in 1866.

Joseph married Mary Peacock the following year and over the next 40 years they managed a successful farming and carting business and somehow found the time to raise 15 children.

Incidentally, before her marriage Ann had been a lady's maid to Madam Shore at Tupton Grove, grandmother of the later-famous Florence Nightingale. Ann often used to accompany the young Florence to church during her visits to Sheffield and, when Ann left to marry, Florence gave her one of her dolls as a gift. Anecdotally, the doll was later played with by Anne's own grandchildren and was eventually buried in the garden at Snaithing Farm whilst playing "funerals".

Ann Stead's younger sister Elizabeth, in 1844 also married a local farmer, William Garrett, a tenant of Ran Moor Farm, later known merely as "Ran Farm" as indeed it is today. Back then however it encompassed 30 acres. Eventually by 1866 William's holding amounted to 65 acres including land at Smeltings Farm, but at the same time he was also tenant of The Norfolk Arms at Ringinglow. So he could legitimately be described as both "publican and farmer" and was the head of another busy local family connected to the original Steads of Snaithing Farm.

A Cast Iron Tardis?



Anyone noticed this curious green structure at the top of Storth Lane? A close inspection reveals a circular column, 2.5m high and approximately 1m in diameter with vertical ribs and horizontal bands. There is even a paneled frieze and cornice with egg-and-dart ornament and a shallow conical top with ball finial. There are two pairs of double doors on opposite sides to enable ease of access for somebody or something!

Actually, the equipment it once housed has long since been removed. This would have immediately betrayed its function as an electric transformer from around 1900; an early component of the electricity distribution system for the Ranmoor area. It took power from the regional generating system and reduced the voltage for onward supply to homes. It was made by the British Electric Transformer Company of Hayes.

As demand grew and electricity generation was refined, this transformer was decommissioned and replaced by more substantial sub-stations. However, it remains a rare example of its kind, hence its Grade II listing by Historic England.

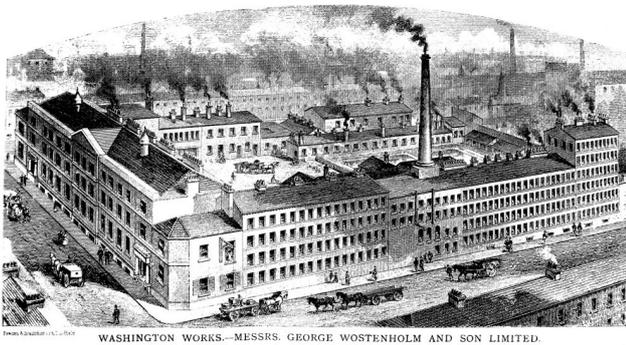
Unfortunately, as the photo shows, it is currently in rather a poor state of repair. Although it has previously been maintained by the City Council, they have now

changed their stance and state that maintenance of the transformer is not their responsibility.

As a Society we believe that this Grade II structure is worth maintaining, so we plan to explore ways of securing support and/or funding to repaint it and enhance its appearance. We would welcome any comments and/or suggestions from members.

George Wostenholm and Kenwood

George Wostenholm & Son was previously one Sheffield's best known modern cutlery firms. George senior began a knife-making business in Broad Lane, which was later moved to Rockingham Street. His son George took over the firm and in 1837 built "Washington Works" in Wellington Street (see below), which specialised in knives and razors identified by the famous I*XL cutlery mark they acquired in 1826. The factory name reflects the fact that much of its output was sold into the American States, where a particularly famous product was the Bowie knife.



Wostenholm is said to have sailed to and from America around 30 times during his business life at a time when sailing ships had not yet been fully replaced by steam. In fact he cited the amount of time spent travelling as the reason for declining the role of Master Cutler three times before he finally accepted in 1856. Yet his willingness to travel and his skills as a trader meant that the I*XL brand was one of the most celebrated in America by the mid-nineteenth century.

In 1840 he purchased land in Sharrow and had Sheffield architects Flockton and Son build his new house "Kenwood" on the lines of Kenwood Village in New York State. He also employed Robert Marnock to lay out his grounds as had already been done successfully for the new Botanical Gardens. His estate eventually comprised 150 acres with its planned roads and avenues of lime trees. In the 1850s, he was instrumental in developing part of Nether Edge as a middle class residential area under strict Land Society rules with a view to maintaining high standards in the area.

At roughly the same time he was spotting potential for residential development in Ranmoor, where, in 1856, he purchased 26 acres of farmland known as "The Storths". After planning the road system (Gladstone, Graham and Chantrey Roads) and identifying potential purchasers he sold the land to the trustees of what became the "Storth Crescent Land Society", and prompted the subsequent formation of six other land societies and a lasting legacy for Ranmoor's subsequent residential development.

George Wostenholm died in 1876. His third wife remarried but died in 1886, and her spinster sister, Annie Rundle inherited Kenwood and lived there until 1922. After serving as a temperance hotel it was enlarged and has since become one of Sheffield's top hotels, still set among the fine grounds created by Robert Marnock.

Quarrying in Ranmoor

Sheffield is built on a sandstone base, so it is not surprising that this material has been quarried over the centuries to provide material for buildings, walls and roads. Sandstone varies in colour and coarseness. Millstone Grit is the well known hard local sandstone ideal for millstones and grinding wheels. In Ranmoor the local stone goes under the name of Crawshaw sandstone. Before canals and railways became widespread building stone would have been very expensive to move and most local building would have used local materials. As brick became more competitive the use of local stone for house construction decreased and quarries became sources of aggregate for road construction.

The location and lifetime of quarries in Ranmoor is not fully documented. Their location after 1850 can sometimes, but not always, be identified on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and on earlier field survey maps. In Ranmoor the most extensive quarrying was to the north of Ranmoor Road below Ranmoor Cliffe Road. Records show that this area was quarried as far back as the 1760s and possibly before. Part of it was designated as a public quarry in 1827. At this time this area was farmland and the stone would have been used for walls and local dwellings. Quarrying continued here up to the late 1800s during which time ownership seems to have changed hands several times. A second small quarry on Snaithing Park Road was active around 1870 but was no longer in use by 1893.

Several known local quarries are not marked on any OS map, not even as "disused". One, located on the north side of Tetney Road, appears on a Fairbanks Survey map of 1762 so presumably had fallen out of use by 1850. A quarry at the junction of Storth Lane and Ivy Park Road was referred to in an 1830 document. Another at the Sandygate Road end of Carsick Hill Road was known to have been worked until the end of the 19th Century and is now a garden. Little is known about one at the lower end of Storth Lane, just south of the bridge. Further away the Barncliffe Quarry was worked into the early 20th Century, and the Bell Hagg Quarry operated until 1966. There were probably other smaller quarries within the area which may have enjoyed only a brief existence or had already fallen out of use by the time the OS maps were drawn up. Traces of these may well remain today. Does anyone know of any?

Committee 2019

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