

Frederick Thorpe Mappin and Thornbury

When Ranmoor was still a village, Frederick Thorpe Mappin built Thornbury in 1865 on farmland purchased from the trustees of the Boy's Charity School. The grounds were landscaped by Robert Marnock, the creator of Sheffield Botanical Gardens and other local and national gardens and parks.

Frederick was the eldest of the four great-grandsons of Jonathan Mappin who had founded the Sheffield silverware company in the 1700s that by the mid nineteenth century had become known as Mappin Brothers. He was born in 1821, left school at fourteen to assist in the family cutlery business and upon the early death of his father six years later found himself in charge. After bringing his three younger brothers into the firm, Frederick left the company in 1859 to become the senior partner in Thomas Turton and Sons, a Sheffield steel manufacturer.

The number and range of his official positions are remarkable. He became a Town Councilor in 1855 and Master Cutler in 1855. Many other roles followed, including being Chairman of the Town Trustees and serving as Mayor in 1877-1878.

Forsaking service in the Town Hall, he stood as a Liberal candidate in the 1880 national election and was elected for the borough of East Retford. Five years later he changed constituency, and was elected for the Hallamshire Division of the West Riding of Yorkshire, where he served for the next twenty years (standing unopposed in the 1886 and 1892 elections).

The Times obituary remarks that it was due to the 'force of his personality' that he was able as a Liberal to command a majority in a seat not naturally well disposed to his politics. In line with a role in parliament, Mappin moved his household to London and he is shown residing there in the 1881 census. His knighthood came largely as a result of his political career. Thornbury remained in the family until the Second World War, after which it became first an annexe to Sheffield Children's Hospital and then the Thornbury private hospital.

The Times reported Frederick Mappin's death in 1910 as depriving Sheffield of one of 'its most distinguished citizens, a man of perhaps the most honourable type known to English public life – wealthy, cultivated, philanthropic and wholehearted in his devotion to public interests'.

Two Vanished Buildings

In this issue we can again thank members Anne and Stuart Barratt for turning up interesting new information on two long-vanished buildings.

Porter House

Anne and Stuart obtained a new (to us) photograph of Porter House, which shows it standing opposite Shepherd (or Porter) Wheel on the other side of the Porter Brook.



Porter House is named as such on the 1851 Ordnance Survey map and is shown even earlier on the Fairbank Survey of 1830. At this time it was probably owned by Earl Fitzwilliam. It was later known as Porter Cottage although locals referred to it as *Poddle 'Ole Farm*, or *Puddle Ole Farm*. The 1851 census entries show that Porter House was occupied by eight people – two families and four lodgers, although neither family appears to have been then connected with farming.

We met Alethea Biggin of the Barrel Tavern in Hangingwater in our last issue. Her son, Isaac Biggin was living in Porter House with his wife Mary and family at the time of the next census in 1861 when they were farming 12 acres of land. Some of the family may have been living at the Barrel Tavern.

After Isaac died in 1866 his widow seems to have continued to work the farm for a further ten years. A sale notice of March 25th 1876 indicates that Mary had given it all up, selling the farm stock and some of the furniture. From the number of animals and equipment identified, it is probable that there was also a farm building here besides the cottage. The cottages were demolished around 1900 when Bingham Park and the Porter valley were developed for local people.

Biggin's Shop and Lamplighter's Cottage

Research into the Biggin family history reveals more information on two of the cottages that we know once stood at the junction of Tom Lane and Fulwood Road. These were demolished by the City Council in 1911-12 when it widened the lower part of Tom Lane.

Joseph Biggin, the son of Isaac and Mary, had originally been a table-blade grinder as well as being involved in farming. By the 1880s he was running a grocery business with his wife Catherine (née Hancock) from the shop at the bottom of Tom Lane.

Our archive holds photos of this and adjacent buildings taken just prior to their demolition. However Stuart and Anne have in their possession a 6" x4" card-mounted photo dated circa 1880, apparently showing Catherine standing at the door, and labelled 'Biggin's Shop and Lamplighter's Cottage'.



They believe this was given to Anne's granddad (John Creswick) by Catherine Biggin. That seems likely as John Creswick lived at Carsick Hill Farm from 1908 to 1912, just up the road from Biggin's shop, and his milk business would certainly have brought him into contact with many local residents.

St Johns' Ceiling

Many of you know that St John's Church was closed on 27th October 2017 following the failure earlier that month of a piece of its Victorian plaster ceiling. The church reopened 10 months later, on 26th August 2018. Interestingly, this compares with the previous closure that followed the devastating fire of 2nd January 1887, when it took 20 months to rebuild the church. On 9th September we celebrated the 130th anniversary of that reopening.

To enable the ceiling to be inspected and repaired, scaffolding was erected throughout the Nave, North and South Aisles during 2017-2018. In all, 117 panels were treated; 28 panels in the North Aisle, 52 in the South Aisles, 26 in the Nave and 11 in the Transept. Each of these panels had to be either repaired or fully replaced, using traditional laths and a mix of horse hair, sand and lime. Incidentally records indicate that the original ceiling used bovine hair because there was a shortage of horse hair at the time caused by an outbreak of anthrax. Those panels that had started to de-bond were secured in place and all the repaired panels have been redecorated. The opportunity was also taken at this time to secure ten ceiling joists that investigations revealed had started to fail, thus preventing further movement.

The overall project cost was £121,500, including nearly £20,500 in VAT. Fortunately, we should be able to obtain a grant from the Listed Places of Worship fund that should match the VAT payment. No other grant applications were made, so the cost of the project to the Church is £101,000.

Ranmoor and Fulwood War Memorials

More than 5,500 men and women from Sheffield were killed during World War One and around 200 memorials to the dead were later erected in the city.

Ranmoor became home to two of these memorials, one erected by the parish church of St John's and the other in the Methodist Chapel in Ranmoor Road. That Chapel was demolished sometime after 1963, when it joined with Hallam Methodist Church at Nether Green. In the 1920s, Christ Church in Fulwood also erected a memorial at the junction of Canterbury Avenue and Fulwood Road.

Sixty eight men from Ranmoor are known to have died as a result of the war, and information about all of these has now been added to the Ranmoor Society website (check 'Historical Archive'). Five of these men do not appear on either the St John's or the Methodist memorial but, with help from Society members, they have now been traced. Three of them are not on memorials in Ranmoor because their parents were members of the Christ Church congregation in Fulwood.

Frank Nichols was a clerk in steel firm Hadfields, who served as a Private in the Sheffield Pals in the York and Lancaster Regiment from September 1914. He was killed on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, 1 July 1916, serving as a machine-gun team leader. His body was never identified, and he is commemorated on the large Thiepval Memorial as well as on the Fulwood memorial.

His brother Charles, a grocer in their father's business, was also killed in the war. After serving as a Second Lieutenant with the Honourable Artillery Company, he was invalided home in August 1917 and died of his injuries on 9 November 1917. He is buried in Fulwood graveyard, and commemorated on the Fulwood Memorial.

In addition, apprentice plumber George Hutchinson was killed in action in France on 5 April 1918 and is buried in the nearby Acheux military cemetery. He is commemorated on his parent's gravestone in Christ Church, as well as being on the Fulwood memorial.

Finally, two Ranmoor men died after the war from illnesses contracted during service. For example, Fred Sanderson lived before and after the war at 26 Stephen Hill, Crosspool, then part of the parish. As a soldier in October 1916, he was transferred to England as "sick", and was later demobilized as an invalid. He was granted a 100% disability pension for endocarditis, a heart disorder caused by infection from a rat- or flea-bite acquired during his time in the Western Front trenches. He died on 8 January, 1921, with his death officially attributed to war service. His grave has not yet been located.

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