

## **The Redmires – Crookes Conduit**

On the first Ordnance Survey map of 1850 the Sheffield Waterworks Conduit is a prominent feature snaking its way across the farmer's fields of Ranmoor. After following a fairly straight route between Redmires Road and Brown Hills Lane it appears in our area just to the south of Carsick Hill Road, then crosses the top portions of Snaithing Lane and Ivy Park Road and continues thereafter between Whitworth and Ranmoor Cliffe Roads. It then runs immediately south of Tetney Road to cross Darwin Lane and along the southern boundary of Tapton and King Edward's Lower School grounds on its way to its final destination, the Crookesmoor reservoir. Since the area has become built-up evidence of its past existence is slim although eagle-eyed observers can spot where the stone walls had been pierced and subsequently rebuilt. At these points it generally crossed under the road surface although certainly a stone aqueduct was used to carry it over Darwin Lane and over the lower ground beyond. It can just be made out in this photograph taken from near Manchester Road.



**Aqueduct carrying the Redmires Conduit**

Originally most of the population in the Ranmoor district and other outlying areas obtained its water from wells and other private sources. The town of Sheffield was dependant on several small reservoirs in the Crookesmoor valley. There were also public wells which the Town Trustees were tasked with sinking and maintaining in good repair. Some men and women and boys made livelihoods by collecting water in buckets from such wells, or from local springs and selling it to the town's residents. In fact the Water Company even attracted marked antipathy from citizens when it first offered to supply water directly to their houses.

Back in the early 1700s it was envisaged that water would be supplied to Sheffield's inhabitants by pumping it up from the river through wooden

pipes but eventually all attempts to do this failed. From the 1730s the idea of using gravity instead of pumps to convey water to Sheffield prevailed and steps were taken to construct reservoirs a short distance outside the town where there was a copious supply of spring water. These included 5 small reservoirs (north of the old Barracks and known as the White House Dams).

In 1830 a parliamentary Act authorized the construction of both the Redmires Middle reservoir and the Hadfield Service reservoir at Crookes which gave a storage capacity of 21million gallons. The Redmires Conduit was constructed to link the two in order to bring the water from the upper Wyming Brook catchment area to the City via this holding reservoir. Sheffield's population at this time was a mere 90,000 but growing fast as industry, particularly steel manufacture, boomed. N.B. although the Act of 1830 originally authorised two reservoirs Rivelin only one was built at this time because of financial constraints.

Interestingly, prior to this water in the town centre had been distributed via wood pipes, using the hollowed out trunks of oak trees some 9-12 inches in diameter. These had to be bored out by hand and tapered to allow each one to fit into the socket of the next pipe and made watertight with a woolen seal. Unsurprisingly this system was ineffective and very costly. When the time came to replace them with cast-iron pipes it was estimated that 13 miles of wooden pipe had been removed.

By 1845, with Sheffield's population now approaching 120,000, the demand for water was outstripping supply and the present Upper and Lower reservoirs at Redmires plus two others on the Rivelin (to compensate mill owners for the loss of their water), were authorised by a second Act of Parliament. Once the last of the three reservoirs, the Redmires Upper, had been completed in 1854 a drainage area of over 2000 acres and a total storage capacity of 670 million gallons became available for the City. All this would have been carried by gravity along a mostly open conduit: one which has now been largely forgotten.

## **Ranmoor Archive – The Oakbrook Road Shops**

In the last issue we promised to feature more items from the Ranmoor Archive. In an earlier newsletter we circulated memories by Alan Bond of the family plumbing business at 360 Fulwood Road founded by his grandfather in 1899 and lasting until the 1970s. Jackie Bond recently sent us some of her late husband's handwritten notes recording his

personal recollections of the Oakbrook Road shops which they knew well when living in Nethergreen Road. They cover the years 1936-1960 and may still ring some bells for you!

### **Oakbrook Road north side**

*No.207: Post Office and sweet shop presided over by Miss Dilley until about the 1950s. I think she had a sister helping.*

*No.211: After a piece of waste ground was a barbers shop owned by Charlie Hill who lived Hunter's Bar way. It was an old-fashioned "spit and sawdust" place with a hard horsehair bench which, as a small boy, I remember was very uncomfortable while waiting for haircuts.*

*No.213: This was a ladies hairdresser, not connected to the barbers', run from after the war by a Mrs Jenkinson who had a steady "wash and set" trade; my mother included. This may have changed hands in the 1960's.*

*No. 215: Next door was the butcher Frank Levesley & Sons We did not register with them during rationing as my mother stuck with Mr Baxter on Ecclesall Road (opposite Endcliffe Park). This was a legacy of our first home on Stainton Road where my parents started married life. But when Mr Baxter retired my mother began to use Levesleys and was in there almost every day until she died.*

*No.217: Next door there was a sweet and tobacco shop; a "dead or alive" place which I seldom visited.*



**Oakbrook Road c.1908 near Hangingwater**

*No.231: This was Barkers, a successful baker and grocer's where we registered during the war and which I knew very well. We used them for all our requirements whilst living in Nethergreen Road. Arnold Barker became a personal friend of my father. He worked as a medical orderly with the RAF stationed at Norton. Both he and my father seemed to have part-time careers which allowed them to keep their civilian businesses going all through the war. After the war, when their son Alan joined the firm, Barkers started a catering business based on Infirmary Road opposite the Infirmary. Eventually the Oakbrook shop was sold to Mrs Bush who went on to establish various care homes for the elderly in the district and later sold the shop.*  
*No.233: Run by Miss Bell, this was an ironmonger;*

*always well-stocked and cluttered. She was here before, during and after the war.*

*No.235: Here Mr Roberts was a fishmonger with a wide range of fish, game and poultry. My parents were fond of fish and also hare. Mr Roberts would keep game hung until it was well ripe. My mother would take a dish and bring back a hare. Jugged hare was a family favorite.*

*No.237: This corner shop at the junction with Hangingwater Road was a well-used greengrocer, especially during the war. Then vegetables were great fillers even though many people grew their own on allotments.*



**Oakbrook Road in the 1960s**

### **Oakbrook Road south side**

*Nos.208-16: On the corner was situated the large "Sheffield and Ecclesall Cooperative" grocers. We never shopped there but I used to go in with friends who did. I can remember them being very careful to collect the dividend slips.*

*Later it was made into a restaurant by friends of mine who were Young Conservatives who were heavily into local politics; it was called the "Lord Mayor's Parlour". A succession of eateries followed with different names and qualities.*

*Next door down was the Co-op butcher.*

*No.202: Next to this was a clock and watch repairer who later sold radio and TV sets.*

*No.204: Next door was a newsagent and I think it still is. My earliest memory is that it was owned by a Mr & Mrs Johnson. Mr Johnson was a friendly chap who I believe only had sight in one eye. He gave us a good newspaper delivery service as well as selling sweets, tobacco, and toys and comics which would interest a child.*

*After the war it was taken over by the Beestons, two brothers who ran the shop efficiently and well for many years. They took over the shop next door which I think was a cobbler.*

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