

Ranmoor Society

April 2003

News

Membership 2003

We now have over 120 paid-up members, and, if the last meeting is anything to go by, our meetings programme continues to stimulate a very healthy interest. There was an audience of 63 for March meeting when Paul Ardron spoke about the *Archaeology of the Porter Valley*, any more and we would have had to arrange a matinee performance!

This newsletter contains background information on the next two meetings. Most of you will now have your 2003 membership cards, so won't really need reminding about them. But if you haven't received a card, then you have probably overlooked paying this year's £5 subscription. If so, there will be a blue 2003 membership subscription form attached to this newsletter as a subtle reminder. Please send subscriptions to Shelagh McDonald, our membership secretary.

We deliver the newsletter to around 190 addresses, i.e. 70 more than have currently paid. We are rarely told when members move away, so would appreciate receiving updates on any changes when they occur. Please contact Shelagh.

Subscription Increase for 2004

This may be your last opportunity to obtain a year's membership for a mere fiver. At this year's AGM in January it was agreed to increase the subscription for next year from £5 to £7 per household. However, for single person households the subscription will remain unchanged. Still excellent value most will agree.

Another change agreed at the AGM is to charge £2 to visitors for meetings (Incidentally, the Sheffield Telegraph recently printed the wrong amount!). As we normally pay speakers a fee of c.£20 plus costs, it seems reasonable to defray these and the room hire costs across everyone attending. And of course it provides another incentive to become a member!

Endcliffe Hall Visit

We had hoped to run the third of these in May. However we have to address the fact that there is a war on! The demands of overseas service on Endcliffe Hall military staff (and the prospect of further activity with respect to the Firemen's Strike) make the proposed visit inconvenient for them at the moment. We promise to review the situation again over the summer, and it may be possible to arrange the visit in the autumn when hopefully the clouds of war have dissipated.

The Concept of the Victorian Suburb

This is the subject of our meeting on **Tuesday 15th April**. Our speaker is John Salt, who, many will remember, gave a very interesting talk last year about the life of J G Graves, the Sheffield philanthropist. John will be looking at Victorian suburbs, comparing for example the social and architectural developments that influenced Ranmoor and Broomhall Park.

The development of suburban housing estates built almost exclusively for the middle classes began in Sheffield, as in many other northern industrial cities, in the 1820s and 30s. Broomhall Park dates from this time. The expansion of heavy industry then led to a rapid increase in Sheffield's population and wealth. This prompted a demand for grander houses for a wealthy middle-class elite, as well as for closely-packed working class housing in the town. The more affluent and mobile members of the community were able to move west from the overcrowded and unhealthy town centre to seek seclusion in areas such as Ecclesall and Hallam, in particular of course, after about 1860, in rural Ranmoor.

The classical Georgian and Regency styles of the early decades of the century gave way to the archetypal Victorian villa. This was often in a park like setting, well screened from its neighbour by dense evergreen shrubberies in order to meet the new criteria of privacy and seclusion.

Continued in column two overleaf

Supertram Market Research

Supertram is contemplating extending its network and 67 years after the last tram rails were torn up, Ranmoor is once again being floated as a possible destination along with Totley, Meadowhead, Low Edges and others. Only 30% of the new service proposed is likely to run along existing roads, and less disruption is promised than when the original system was built.

There is no indication yet of the precise routes envisaged, but Supertram say they are involving local people in consultation exercises. At the AGM no-one was able to confirm they had been asked any such questions, so we asked a few of our own.

Attitudes seemed evenly balanced as to whether Supertram would deliver a more or less efficient transport system to and from the City. However, strong concern was expressed about the likely increase in on-road parking near any terminus or tram stop and about the aesthetic affect of tram posts and wires. Most expected that the introduction of Supertram would add to existing congestion along Fulwood Road.

Industrial Evolution In the Porter Valley

In March, Paul Andron pointed us towards the many historical clues to the valley's agricultural past, hidden away in the walls, stoops, pathways and field patterns, many still (just) visible today.

In May, Graham Hague will remind us of its industrial past, and of the vocabulary of water-power with its goits, leats and races. The Porter was one of the most intensively used of the Sheffield rivers. As it flows the four miles or so between the Mayfield Valley and its confluence with the Sheaf, it falls about 450 feet. It once supplied 20 working mills with its then precious commodity, nine of which were above Hunters Bar.

The heyday of the Porter's mills were the 18th and 19th centuries, although the Shepherd (or Porter) Wheel dates back to at least 1566, and the Fulwood Upper Mill, a corn mill, to 1641.

The Shepherd Wheel is one of our most historically valuable local buildings, although now sadly in need of renovation. It is the only one to have remained intact, and was in working order very recently. Today, with the exception of the Sharrow snuff mill, the mills below Hunters Bar have all but been obliterated by later urban developments.

Dates of Meeting and Walk

Graham Hague will give his illustrated talk *From Water Power to Electricity* on **Tuesday 20th May** at the Ranmoor Parish Centre, our normal venue. He has also agreed to lead a guided walk for members to point out the remaining clues to this industrial era. Those interested in walking the Upper Porter should assemble near the children's playground at Forge Dam at **6.30pm, Wednesday 11th June**, and perhaps pray for reasonable weather!

The plan is to start at the Old Forge and follow the valley down to Endcliffe Park (the site of Endcliffe Wheel), finishing there at approximately 9pm. This ensures that the walk is downhill all the way...but that the return is very definitely uphill!

If anyone would like a lift by car back to Ranmoor, please contact the Secretary, and we will try to arrange this in advance.



The Victorian Suburb -continued from Page 1

The initial 1874 plan, shown above, for the (ultimately unsuccessful) Ranmoor Crescent Land Society shows how the new roads were planned to wind and curve, to create constantly changing vistas of these picturesque villa residences emerging from their leafy surroundings.

The road layouts of several of our Ranmoor Land Societies tended to conform to the ideal, and frequently specified broad 40 foot wide avenues, which were then planted with trees at set intervals.

The houses, preferably detached, were adapted to accommodate a new lifestyle, involving a greater degree of conspicuous consumption, and to households where servants now played an increasingly important role.

Some servants were required to live in, but many men servants (butlers, footmen, coachmen, grooms, gardeners, etc.) lived in small cottages and lodges in the grounds of the larger houses or in local terraced houses, such as Marr Terrace and the lower part of Graham Road.

Ranmoor Society Committee 2003

Chairman	David Lee	230 1633
Secretary	Gerald Eyeleigh	263 0937
Membership Sec	Shelagh McDonald	230 4090
Treasurer	Gill Battye	230 1596
Archive Coordinator	Peter Warr	230 9174
Planning Matters	John & Elizabeth Bridgewater	230 5567
	Margaret Kerry	230 5255

Block Bookings at Sheffield Theatres

We have been asked whether the Society would be interested in organising block bookings for performances at the Crucible and Lyceum. Groups of 10 or more become eligible for a 25% discount on normal ticket prices.

However, whether we wish to do this on a regular or infrequent basis, this would require some administration mainly by telephone. Is anyone out there interested in doing that job on behalf of Society members? If so, please contact the Secretary.