

Ranmoor Society

January 2008

A Happy New Year to Everyone

It only seems yesterday that we were ringing in 2007!

A warm thanks to all the members who supported the Ranmoor Society programme during this last year. We appreciate the fact that even on the most inclement of evenings many of you turn out to support our talks. Most meetings attract an audience of 40 plus, and this never fails to impress visiting speakers. That gives us additional confidence when inviting them to talk at meetings. From the feedback that we receive it seems that we remain fairly successful compared to other local history societies. We hope that our 2008 programme (see the panel overleaf) will encourage you to renew your membership next year. Even if you are unable to come on dark winter evenings, we hope that you enjoy receiving our quarterly newsletters and that our summer walk may be an added attraction.

2008 Subscriptions

Our membership levels remain buoyant. At the end of 2007 we had 160 member households on our records, approximating to about 250 individuals. Subscriptions for another year are now due, and we hope that interest in membership of the Society will not have wavered.

Subscriptions remain £7 for a household and £5 for single individuals. It will help Shelagh McDonald, our Membership Secretary, if you would send your subscription, with the enclosed slip, directly to her. Otherwise see her in person at the Annual General Meeting on 15th January.

AGM Tuesday 15th January

The AGM will start at 7.30 p.m. in the Ranmoor Parish Centre. As in previous years it will be structured to give members a chance to raise general concerns and to influence our future activities.

Please inform the Secretary in advance of any particular items you would like included. The main agenda items will be as on previous occasions: Reports, Planning Issues, and Election of Officers.

Wine and soft drinks will be available. But, just in case you begin to feel that everything is just too normal this time, drinks will be accompanied by *ghost stories!*

News

Great Fire at Ranmoor Church

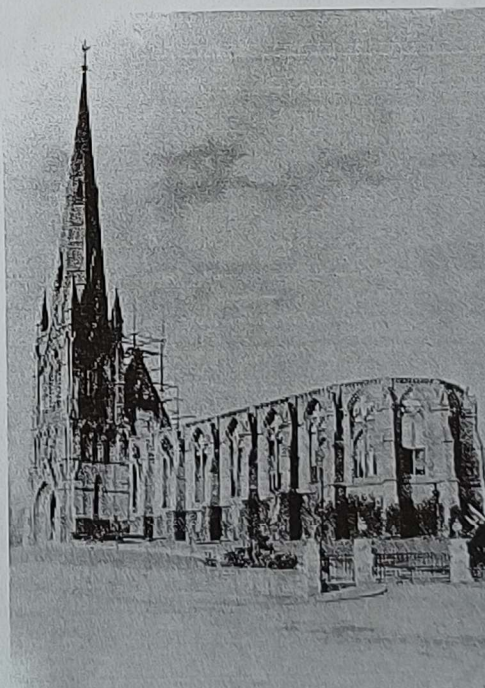
Building in Ruins

We are composing this newsletter in mid-December with frosts outside reminiscent of winters past. Apparently New Year's Day 1887 was particularly cold when, at five-o'clock in the morning, Thomas Leighton the clerk and sexton at St John's was being particularly mindful of his wealthy parishioners' comfort at the service later that morning. The reporter for *the Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, in true Dickensian style, reminded its readers that:

"Notwithstanding its pleasant surroundings and the beauty of the church itself, it early got the reputation of being draughty and, though much had been done to remedy it, nothing proved absolutely successful and a draughty church it remained."

The extreme coldness of the weather probably led the sexton to make an unusually good fire inasmuch as there had been complaints of the church being somewhat cold."

It appears Leighton had been in the church cellar "attending to the heating apparatus and getting the furnace up to a good heat, after which he went home (37 Ranmoor Road) to breakfast, all then



being as usual within the building. He returned about 9 20 a.m. At this moment he detected a smell as of burning wood and later saw smoke overhead, and so much of it as to excite alarm. He ascended the sloping ground at the back of the church to see whether the smell was caused by the wind backing down the smoke from the chimney. A moment's glance showed that the church was on fire as a small volume of smoke was issuing from the organ chamber.

Leighton ran off to inform the Rev. A. G. Tweedie and the churchwardens. On his way he saw a man in the employ of Mr Outwin of the Ranmoor Inn, whom he instructed to communicate with the police at Broomhill. This the latter did by riding one of his master's horses to Broomhill, and thence a telephone message was sent to the Fire Brigade Station in Rockingham Street. When, a few minutes afterwards, the Rev. A. G. Tweedie came upon the scene the church was full of smoke, so dense at the eastern end that as to prevent the reverend gentleman from seeing the communion table and the plate upon it. About this time the two churchwardens, Mr Hamer Chalmer and Mr R. Colver, arrived almost breathless upon the scene.

Meetings Programme 2008

January 15 th	Annual General Meeting
February 19 th	Sheffield's Past (and perhaps forgotten) Civic Buildings
March 18 th	History of King Edward VII School
April 15 th	Sheffield's Cutlers and Silversmiths
May 20 th	Sheffield General Cemetery and its Ranmoor Connections
June 5 th	A Walk around the General Cemetery
June 17 th	Ranmoor's Pubs and Beer-houses
July & August	No Meetings
Sept. 16 th	Sheffield Then and Now: Photographs and memories
October 21 st	Ranmoor in the Newspapers
November 18 th	Sheffield Dialects Past and Present

The police from Broomhill were not long in arriving with a hose reel and were speedily followed by Inspector Toulson. But unfortunately they were for some time prevented from obtaining water in consequence of the hydrant in the ground being frozen, and it was only after several applications of hot water that the ice could be removed and the hose attached.

Sir Frederick Mappin (resident of Thornbury), who naturally takes a considerable interest in the church, was early upon the scene of the fire. Whilst it was at its height he was afraid that the tower might fall, and acting upon his earnest instructions, the police and others who were assisting them moved out of harm's reach.

In consequence of the fire occurring on a Sunday morning it soon attracted a considerable crowd of spectators. However they were exceedingly well behaved and gave the police but little trouble.

Many of the residents in the neighbourhood were either at breakfast or in their bedrooms when the fire broke out. Amongst these in the latter position was Mr J.E. Bingham whose residence is opposite the church and who therefore could see the smoke from his bedroom window. Though only partially dressed he hastened to the fire and continued hard at work until further assistance was unnecessary.

Researchers Wanted!

The excerpts relating to the "Great Fire at Ranmoor Church" are typical of the quaintly verbose, and unashamedly deferential prose of Victoria's reign, were culled from Sheffield newspapers in early January 1878. They are available to us from the microfilmed resources of Local Studies section of Sheffield Library. They cover one of Ranmoor's major historical milestones but we know there are many more articles relating to Ranmoor that we need to uncover.

For our October meeting next year we hope to bring a few more such articles to your attention. If any one wants to volunteer to be involved in some relaxed research work at the local studies library in advance of this please contact Gerald Eveleigh. The main requirement is an ability and patience to deal with copies of sometimes dubious quality!

Ranmoor Society Committee

Chairman:	Andrew Swift	268 5158
Secretary:	Gerald Eveleigh	230 1992
Membership Sec:	Shelagh McDonald	230 1048
Treasurer:	Gill Battye	230 1596
Archive Coordinator:	Peter Warr	230 9174
Planning Matters:	David Barber	230 4717
Minutes Secretary:	Reg Cleaver	230 9876
General Matters:	Carolyn Feeley	230 7421