

Ranmoor Society

September 2007

News

Ranmoor Summer Walk

The months of June and July may have given us appalling weather this year, but someone managed to conjure up a glorious evening for our walk at the end of May. Indeed our luck has held now for three consecutive years.

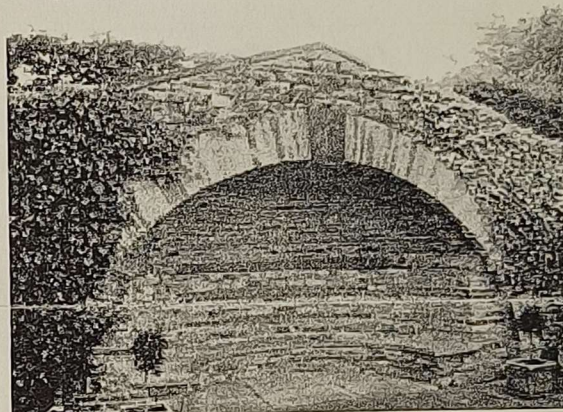
Each year we try to arrange a theme, which this year was Ranmoor's Grade II listed buildings and other edifices. The walk began at the top of Storth Lane opposite the ornate electric transformer, circa 1920, one of 12 or so that were erected in Sheffield at this time. The only other one we know of is in Highcliffe Road. Few realise its Grade II listed status and, judging by its run down condition, nor do Yorkshire Electricity. Strolling down towards Nether Green we passed on the left the site of the Rand Moor Cutlery Works where the Beal family used to produce tailors' scissors and knives for butchers and shoe manufacturers. This closed before the 1860s, and the buildings (including a steam engine and workers' cottages) were pulled down as the land was developed for housing.

We paused to take in the view from the cast iron viaduct. This was built by W. E. Laycock c.1875 to carry the new Stumperlowe Crescent over the deeply cut Water (now Storth) Lane, so connecting the thoroughfare of Fulwood Road with the Stumperlowe Crescent Estate. Although Grade II listed, it is not really in first rate condition.

Had we left ourselves more time we might have taken a detour to Nether Green to mark two other groups of buildings that appear on the list. On one side is the Edwardian School, built 1904, with its boundary wall, railings and gates. Across Fulwood Road are the late 18th century Nether Green cottages that once were within the common land of the Green itself. And we would also have been reminded of a 20th century Grade II edifice: none other than an old-style telephone box at the junction of Tom Lane and Fulwood Road. Giles Gilbert Scott designed this now classic "K2" box in the 1930s. Several were spared replacement by English Heritage, who persuaded BT to leave them be, particularly if they fit into an appropriate historical context.

Our ramble continued past Storth Oaks, a large imposing mansion, formed in 1875 from a pair of earlier semis on Graham Road, by industrialist William Brittain, who was closely associated with Sheffield's public life in the late Victorian era. The house, stable range and gateway are each listed.

Along Fulwood Road towards Ranmoor we made another detour, to "The Bungalow", 387 Fulwood Road, an interesting building resembling the bridge of a ship, between Fulwood & Oakbrook Roads (not actually listed). The Ranmoor Archive already holds a photograph of early resident George Addy, in dashing Edwardian dress with his family on the veranda c.1900-10. The current owner, John Anderson kindly allowed us access and relayed more of the house's history as told to him by relatives of the original owner. He also had more photos dating from the time when sheep were grazing in the adjacent field!



The Lutyens Alcove
Photograph by Joyce Douglas

Then on to Esholt, 381 Fulwood Road, built c.1902 by Albert Hobson, MD of Thomas Turner and Co. and Master Cutler in that year. For many years the house has been given over to commercial offices, but the jewel in its crown is to be found at the bottom of its original garden.

David Stone's house was more recently built on that lower part, and he kindly invited us to view the Grade II listed potting shed and the hemispherical garden alcove and steps which are otherwise hidden from view (see above). These date from the "Arts and Crafts" movement and have been attributed to Edwin Lutyens. Lutyens, in his earlier years carried out many commissions for large country houses, often in conjunction with garden designer Gertrude Jekyll. Later of course he gained the reputation of being one of Britain's greatest architects. He was responsible for the design of the Whitehall Cenotaph and other war memorials, and the original design for Liverpool's Roman Catholic cathedral. He was extremely influential in designing and setting out buildings in New Delhi in the closing years of the British Raj.

But how did Lutyens come to design parts of this particular garden in Ranmoor? We don't have any details, but hopefully someone may know someone else who does and this could initiate some serious research. Suffice it to say that few people have any idea that this gem lies hidden in Ranmoor, and fewer still have been able to see it close up. Those of us on this year's walk were very grateful to David for his hospitality on that warm summer evening.

We still had three more Grade II listed buildings to view; Charles Firth's Riverdale and its lodge, his brother Mark Firth's Oakbrook, and last but by no means least the majestic spire and nave of St John's Church. But by the time the Ranmoor Inn hove into view our pace had quickened, as suddenly there were even more important lists to contemplate!

House Histories

For our May meeting, four members presented summaries of the historical data collected on our own houses for the Ranmoor Archive. We highlighted the various local information sources available including street directories, census information, sale plans, planning applications and various old maps that enabled us to discover when and by whom they were built and who had lived in them since.

One of the new sources that we have recently looked at is The West Riding Registry of Deeds in Wakefield. This was established in 1704 and closed for registrations in 1970. It contains summaries ("memorials") of deeds to millions of properties in the West Riding. The information held includes the date of the deed, the names and addresses of the parties (buyers and sellers), a description of the property and occasionally land boundaries, restrictive covenants and rights of access.

The memorials, all written in a clerk's hand, are kept in huge bound volumes, which are available for perusal by the public. You need the address of the property and the name of either the vendor or the buyer. The surnames are arranged alphabetically in a personal name index which will then direct you to the volume and the particular memorial to which they refer.

Appointments are recommended because there is limited room available, but the WRRD staff is very helpful and there is also car parking on site. But beware! A mere morning flies by so quickly, particularly if you have a tendency to be sidetracked by interesting but not strictly relevant lines of enquiry. If you would like a copy of a WRRD user guide, contact Gerald Eveleigh.

Some People and Places in 19th Century Ranmoor

In June, Peter Warr drew on our Archive material to illustrate some of the interesting people who have shaped the suburb. The population of Ranmoor tripled between 1851 and 1891, with an increase both in servants, gardeners, coachmen etc., and in the emerging middle class.

Samuel Cocker (born 1823) built 13, 14 and 16 Gladstone Road in the 1870s. His company was successful in the manufacture of wire for needles, pins and so on, and expanded into other products.

James Dixon (1820-1912) was a grandson of the founder (in 1806) of what became James Dixon and Sons. He built Tylecote (7 Gladstone Road) (1880) in a tile-covered style that was opposed by his neighbours, as it did not conform to the stone-clad requirements of the Storth Crescent Land Society.

Sir John Bingham (1820-1915) lived in West Lea (where we hold our meetings). He was a councillor and magistrate, and held many other public offices. He was the leader of public protests against granite road surfaces (being too slippery, noisy, dangerous, and harmful to horses). Several city-centre streets were altered to wooden paving as a result, before macadam surfaces came into use.

Future Meetings

On **September 18th** Joan Unwin will be describing *Personalities in Sheffield's Cutlery and Edge Tool Trades*, and we hope that some of these will turn out to have connections to Ranmoor.

On **October 16th** Andrew Swift will be following up his earlier presentations on transport in the area by focussing on *The Impact of the Motor Car in Ranmoor*.

On **November 20th** Howard Smith, who has previously given us talks on Waymarkers and Turnpike Roads in Sheffield and Derbyshire, will this time be telling us *The Story of the English Inn*.

Ranmoor Society Committee 2007

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