

Isaac Deakin: Pioneer of Early Ranmoor

In 1841 Upper Hallam was described as “a wild and thinly populated township” The area between Fulwood and Broomhill was one of scattered farms, cottages and hedged fields. This was when Isaac Deakin, who had farmed some of these fields over in Stumperlowe, came to Ranmoor to buy a small plot of land sandwiched between the Fulwood and Ranmoor Roads.

He bought what was little more than an acre directly from its owner, Robert Middleton, a Hillsborough butcher, although he had no plan to farm it. His intention was to develop it as building land. Within just a few days of his purchase he had divided the plot (No 198) into five sections and sold off the three facing on to the Fulwood Road to local people; James Waterfall, a file smith, Jonathan Swann, a butler and Robert Thompson, a schoolmaster. The top section, adjacent to Ranmoor Road and accessed by footpath from Fulwood Road, was earmarked to create a small terrace of four houses of the sort suitable for small business managers. It would later be known as Cliff Terrace. He reserved the final plot close to the Fulwood Road for his own house and shop. Cliff View, now the “West 10” wine bar) would thus become the first dedicated shop in Ranmoor.



Far right: Cliff View, Isaac Deakin's Shop c.1900

By examining records at the Wakefield Records Office we discover that his interest in building development was not solely confined to Ranmoor. It seems that over previous years Isaac Deakin had been buying (and possibly selling) several small pieces of land on the western side of the city: specifically in Crookesmoor, Sharrow, Glossop Road, Ecclesall and Hannover Street. The 1833 Street Directory records Isaac Deakin simply as a farmer in Stumperley (sic) but clearly he was adding other strings to his bow.

By 1841 the directory states he was no longer just a farmer but a shopkeeper and constable here. This was in the days before a national police force had been created, when the post of parish constable was charged with local policing duties. This meant he might be expected to arrest criminals and vagabonds where necessary (perhaps less demanding in Stumperlowe than in other parts of Sheffield!) Commonly the JP would choose such officials from local tradesmen or farmers so this indicated that he was held in higher than average esteem.

The 1841/2 Electoral Roll confirms that Isaac Deakin was a householder and thus entitled to vote and that the “house and land” entitling him was Stumperlowe Hall no less! Admittedly in the 1840s the Hall would certainly have been in poorer condition than it later became and was possibly occupied by more than a single family. It was Henry Isaac Dixon who purchased the hall 20 years later and substantially renovated it and indeed virtually rebuilt it. Picture Sheffield holds a plan of the Hall and the surrounding land drawn by Fairbank when placed for sale in 1840. The land is divided into lots and Isaac Deakin's name appears in manuscript over the main building, and four fields (Back Croft, Carrion Croft, Near Snaithing and Far Snaithing).

Could the sale of the Hall, even if slightly ramshackle, have provided the funds for Isaac to dabble in land speculation in Ranmoor and beyond? He was about 60 years old and may well have felt ready to retire into the gentler occupation of shop keeping. With his entrepreneurial spirit he might have spotted the new opportunities offered by Sheffield's expanding population and the increased need by its inhabitants to travel. The turnpike to Glossop had recently opened. Fulwood Road had its two beerhouses (the Highland Laddie and the Ranmoor Inn), and a general/ grocers store nearby might promise a nice retirement occupation for him and his wife.

It is worth noting that it would be another 20 years before the big-hitting industrialists and their followers would be attracted to the area between Broomhill and Ranmoor. Mark Firth was then styled as the “Pioneer of Ranmoor” but Isaac Deakin may have equally deserved such an epithet for playing a role in Ranmoor's history a little earlier. And after all, he has a road in Ranmoor named after him!

Storth Oaks: Home of William Brittain

There is a tendency to overlook this Grade II listed residence, standing at the junction of Graham and Stumperlowe Hall Roads because it has been shrouded in institutional ownership since 1950, first as nurses' residence and then as a drug-rehabilitation centre.

But Storth Oaks was for many years the family home of William Henry Brittain who, was described by the Sheffield Daily Telegraph as “*the father of his native city*” after his death in 1922. Not only had he been the head of steel and file manufacturer, Broadhead Hall and Company situated at Alma Works in Barkers Pool but a man who served as an alderman in Sheffield over almost 40 years. This included a term as the master cutler in 1878 and subsequently mayor in both 1883 and 1884. Brittain's particular enthusiasm for art, literature and antiquities led him to becoming chair of the city's Libraries and Museums Committee and thus an active supporter of the formation of Sheffield University and an active contributor to the Mappin Art Gallery.

Harry Brittain's eldest son enjoyed a spectacular career as a politician and journalist. He became the Conservative M.P. for Acton in London and was highly regarded for his promotion of the idea of transatlantic fellowship between Britain and the United States. He founded the Pilgrims Society in 1902, chaired it for 17 years and was later its president. This elite dining club has served to underpin the "special relationship" between Britain and the United States over succeeding years" and has boasted a membership of politicians, diplomats, businessmen, and writers including Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher and several American presidents. Brittain was created KBE in 1918 for services in the First World War, and a CMG in 1924. He covers much of this in his autobiography "Pilgrims and Pioneers", published in 1928.

"Pilgrims and Pioneers" includes several proud references to Sheffield and his native Yorkshire including this one that recalls his childhood circa 1880.

"I was born at Ranmoor near Sheffield, which in the early Seventies was a quiet village picturesquely placed on the hills above this ever-growing Yorkshire town. It was not a city then and there were few buildings between my old home and the breezy moors of Derbyshire. Today the municipal trams run through and far beyond this pleasant spot and the great city has overflowed on this as on most other sides. Notwithstanding this there are still few cities in England with more glorious countryside than is to be found in the immediate neighborhood of this world-famous centre of steel".

At a comparatively early age I went to a day school which was situated in a section of the town mostly peopled by doctors. Going to school was quite an adventure; a half mile walk took me to the Ranmoor Inn, where a little Penny Bus, drawn by a pair of horses, and steered by an elderly gentleman in a top hat, bowled us along a good level road to the larger village of Broomhill. Here all levels ended, the main road from Glossop descending to the centre of Sheffield down a goodly gradient which took four sturdy horses to make the double journey."



"The Little Penny Bus" remembered in Pilgrims & Pioneers
NB This stopped at the Bulls Head not as Brittain remembers

In his book Harry Brittain also recalls the milieu in which his parents moved: *"In those Victorian days (c. 1880) before the introduction of such frivolities as cocktails or even sherry as a pre-prandial aperitif, my*

parents used to greet their friends at somewhat large and lengthy formal dinners. He particularly remembers Prince Albert Victor, elder son of Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, visiting them when he came to Sheffield to open the Corn Exchange. As chief magistrate at the time "my father had to do most of the honours".

William Brittain is credited with both saving Endcliffe Woods and proposing the acquisition of Weston Park for the city of Sheffield. In this context he would have come into close contact with the landscape designer Robert Marnock who had already worked on designs for the Botanical Gardens, the General Cemetery and Weston Park. No surprise then that he was able to persuade Marnock to work and apply these skills to his own grounds as he had already done at F T Mappin's "Thornbury" and George Wostenholm's "Kenwood".



STORTH OAKS.
www.picturesheffield.com

Engraving from Sheffield Illustrated 1885.
NB It was originally two separate semi-detached houses

It seems very likely that the Marnock connection with the grounds and the kitchen garden here was a key element in the Sheffield Planning Department's decision of February 2025 to reject the recent proposal by the new owner to build a modern 5- bed roomed accommodation block which, they said,

"This development would detract from the special architectural and historic interest of Storth Oaks and be detrimental to the character of the Ranmoor Conservation Area".

Committee

Chairman	Mike Killingley	263 0454
Secretary	Gerald Eveleigh	230 1992
Treasurer	Nick Morris	07515 889 394
Planning	John Cole	229 5809
Membership	Peter Marrison	230 3238
Archive	Sharon Forde	07563 24099838
Support		