

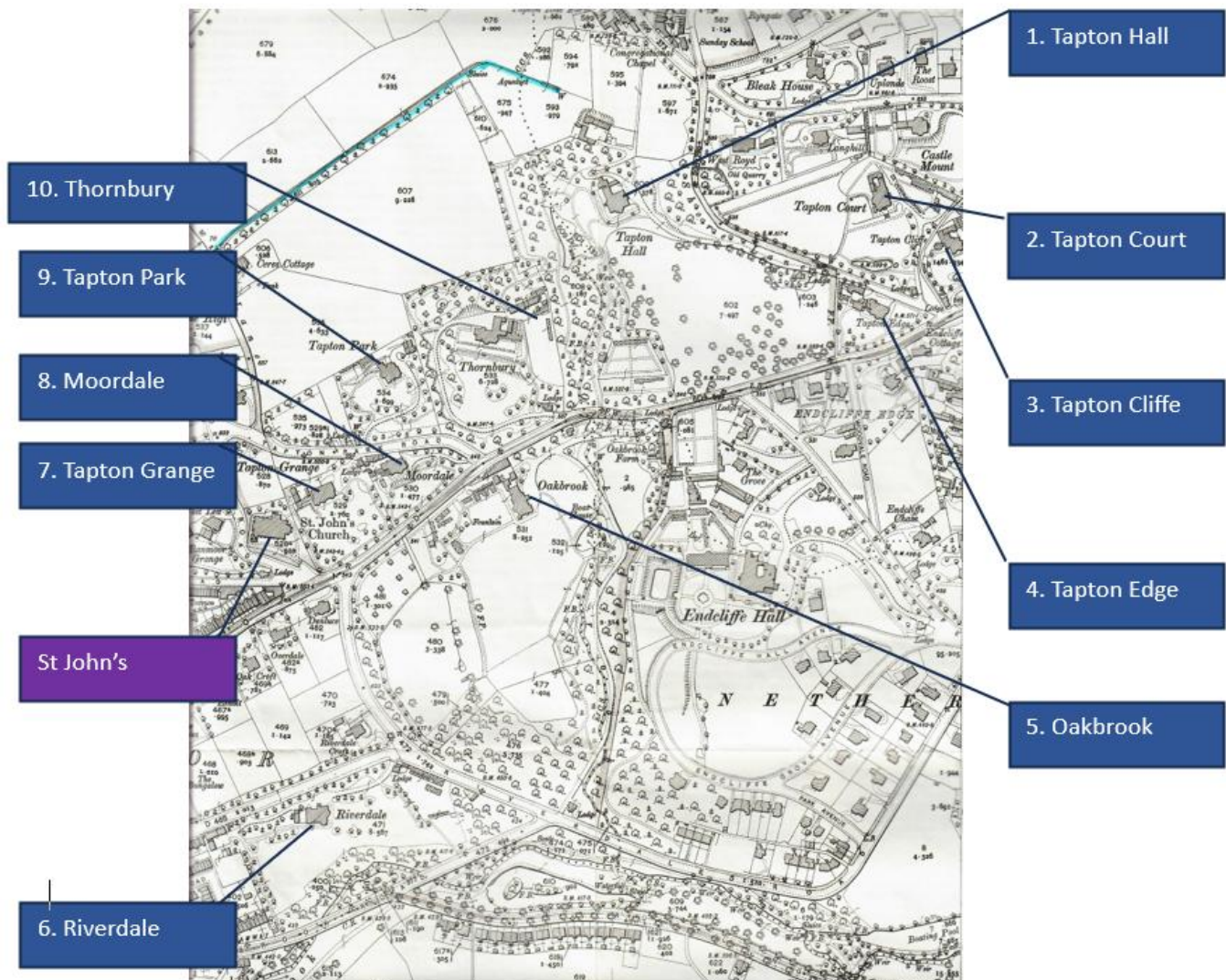
Scissors Paper Stone

The Mansions of Ranmoor

A virtual walk to discover who lived in some of the large properties in Ranmoor

Choosing which mansions to include in a virtual walk is challenging in the Ranmoor setting because there are so many of the large properties in the area. My choices were made in the end on a kinship theme, with other large houses included because we would have 'walked past' them. Many of these family dwellings were later converted into nurses' homes or halls of residence for the University of Sheffield. They have each had a number of owners so I have highlighted just a few for each of the properties.

The map below shows the route we'll be taking.



Map: maps.nls.uk

The starting point was Tapton Hall, a mansion that replaced the earlier Tapton Grove that had been built on the site in 1788 by Joseph Badger. This early mansion had also been occupied in the early 19th century by William Shore and his wife Mary, who were the grandparents of Florence Nightingale. The later property was designed by Flockton, Lee & Abbott and built for Edward Vickers in 1854. It was later owned and occupied by the Wilson family (of snuff mill fame) from 1867 – 1958 when it was subsequently purchased by the Freemasons.



Tapton Court

Tapton Court, an Italianate mansion was built in 1868 for John Henry Andrew who sold the property to Henry Steel in 1879. Steel is a fascinating character – a self-made man who made his money on the race courses of England and became a friend of Edward Prince of Wales, subsequently Edward VII, and of course the founder of Steel, Peech and Tozer, a successful steelmaking business. The house was purchased in 1933 by the J. G. Graves Charitable Trust and became a Nurses' home until the closure of the Royal Hospital in 1978. It was then a Hall of Residence for the students of the University of Sheffield. A fire in 2010 damaged the building and it remained in a derelict condition until it was purchased and redeveloped in 2020. It has now been converted into 37 new homes.

Walking down the hill we come across Tapton Cliffe – on the corner of Shore Lane and Fulwood Road. This was built in 1864 for John Yeomans Cowlshaw, nephew of John Newton Mappin the brewer, who had moved into Birchlands, just along the road, by 1861. Yeomans was a very talented man, trained as a pearl cutter by Mappin, and his specialism was fruit knives. He also shared his uncle's passion for art. A later resident of the house, Frank Atkin of Atkin Brothers (Silversmiths) Ltd sold the property for half its market value to the University of Sheffield to be used as a Hall of Residence for female students. It has recently been converted back into a single dwelling.



Tapton Cliffe

Tapton Edge, on the opposite side of the road from Tapton Cliffe, was built for Edward Firth, the younger brother of Mark. It was designed by Flockton & Abbott in 1864. Its grounds were designed by Robert Marnock (he designed the gardens of many of the Ranmoor mansions). After Firth's death the house was purchased by William Tozer, partner of Henry Steel, who was involved in the manufacturing side of the business. Tapton Edge was then converted into a nurses' home for the Royal Hospital in Division Street until 1972 and subsequently into a privately run home for elderly people. It is currently awaiting redevelopment.

Oakbrook is probably the second most famous of the Ranmoor mansions, after Endcliffe Hall. It was designed by William Flockton & Son and built for Mark Firth, of Thomas Firth & Sons. The property was extended in 1874-5, in time for the visit from the Prince and Princess of Wales to Sheffield – they stayed with the Firths at Oakbrook. Firth was a great philanthropist and benefactor for the people of Sheffield. He was a staunch Methodist, funding the building of the Methodist New Connexion Chapel (designed by Flockton) in Broomhill. He was also a firm believer in the value of education, serving as the first vice-chairman of the Sheffield School Board in 1870, and by 1879 he had provided more than £25,000 towards the creation of what became Firth College in Leopold Street. It would be interesting to know what his views would have been about his house being used as a Roman Catholic school!

One of the advantages of doing a virtual walk is that the distance between the properties does not matter. The next house on the walk is Riverdale, which is some distance from Oakbrook. This house was built for Charles Henry Firth, the youngest brother of Mark and Edward. The 1898 sales brochure stated that the property had been "erected regardless of cost" and Pevsner describes the house as "sumptuous Gothic". Firth and his second wife Marianne (née King) were Anglicans, and great benefactors to St John's church. In 1881 Firth became managing director of Thomas Firth & Sons after the death of his eldest brother Mark. The house

was then bought by J. G. Graves, who by 1903 employed more than 2000 people in his mail order business. The property has now been converted into apartments.



Tapton Grange

Tapton Grange is the only mansion on the “walk” that no longer exists. It was built on a three acre site for James William Harrison, who remained unmarried. The grounds were designed by Marnock. Harrison was in partnership with his brother Henry and friend William Howson who took over Thomas Sansom & Sons and rebranded it to Harrison Brothers & Howson. Henry Harrison moved to America; Howson was the Traveller and James Harrison remained in Sheffield. During his lifetime he was a great benefactor to local hospitals and schools and provided the land on which St John's Ranmoor was built. Later owners include the National Union Teachers' Benevolent Fund which used the house to

provide a home for teachers' orphans. It was demolished in around 1970 and the site was split into two. The northern part provided the land for the Ballard Hall of residence for the then Sheffield Polytechnic; the southern part was developed as Oakbrook View, which included a hostel for the council's Social Services Dept. Both of these developments were demolished some time ago and the land has now been redeveloped for private residences.

Tapton Park Road was created in 1863 by the trustees of the Boys' Charity school. Moordale was built on land at the junction of Tapton Park Road and Fulwood Road, and purchased by James Nicholson. The house was probably designed by Hill & Swann. Nicholson worked with his brothers William and John in John Nicholson & Sons, cutlery manufacturers in Mowbray Street. The firm had been established by their father. James Nicholson moved to 7 Broomfield Road in around 1873 after the death of his first wife, Harriet. After being converted into offices for various companies the property became the Fulwood Inn in 1999, now known as The Florentine.

The property named Tapton Park was built in a two acre site on the north side of Tapton Park Road. It was owned by William Howson, business partner of James Harrison who lived on the south side of the road. Howson devoted himself to the business until his death in 1884. His son George also worked for Harrison Brothers and Howson but was more active outside the company, becoming Master Cutler in 1893. The property remained in family hands until 1936 when it became the head office of General Refractories. It is now known as Tapton Park House and is private residences.

Our final mansion on the walk is Thornbury, built in 1865 for Frederick Thorpe Mappin, the eldest son of Joseph Mappin and his wife Mary (née Thorpe). After the death of his father Frederick took over the family business (Joseph Mappin & Son) and looked after his three younger brothers (Edward, Joseph Charles and John Newton (the younger)). Frederick had married Mary Crossley Wilson in 1845, daughter of John Wilson a cutler, who lived at Oakholme. When John Newton (the younger) became a partner in the family firm in 1857 disputes arose and the firm was dissolved. Frederick became the senior partner in Thomas Turton & Sons; Edward & Joseph formed the partnership Mappin Brothers and John Newton moved to London, met and married Ellen Elizabeth Webb in 1860 and went into partnership with her brother George Webb jun. and they traded as Mappin & Webb in a partnership that flourished.

Frederick & Mary's middle son Wilson Mappin married Emily Kingsford Wilson in 1876, daughter of George Wilson of Tapton Hall. Frederick Mappin continued to progress both locally and nationally. He became a town magistrate in 1870, Town Trustee from 1871 and became Mayor in 1877. He was elected to parliament in 1880, representing East Retford and later was Liberal MP for the Hallamshire Division of the West Riding of Yorkshire from 1885-1905 after his original parliamentary seat was abolished. He became a Pro-Chancellor for the new University of Sheffield in 1905 and the Faculty of Engineering is now housed in the Sir Frederick Mappin Building, in Mappin Street, renamed in his honour. He died in 1910 and Thornbury was then occupied

by Wilson & Emily Mappin. Wilson died in 1925; Emily died in 1940. After her death the house became an annexe for the Children's Hospital until in 1991 when it reopened as a private hospital.

So, we have now come full circle. All the properties started as mansions for the steel magnates of the mid-19th century and all but one still exist, albeit rarely in the same format as a single residence:

- Tapton Hall – Masonic Lodge
- Tapton Court - residential apartments
- Tapton Cliffe - being developed into a single residential property
- Tapton Edge -awaiting development
- Oakbrook – Notre Dame School
- Riverdale – private apartments, with other apartments in the grounds
- Tapton Grange – demolished and the land developed for housing
- Moordale – The Florentine
- Tapton Park – residential
- Thornbury -private hospital

This is of course just one walk of many possible strolls around the suburb of Ranmoor which is rich in such properties.

Judith Pitchforth
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