

The Story of Gillfield Wood

Uncovering the history of Totley's ancient wood

In November 2012 The Friends of Gillfield Wood, a voluntary group in Totley, Sheffield, received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund's "All Our Stories" programme. This grant was to enable us, together with local people, to learn how to survey our wood for its archaeology, to carry out surveys and archive research and to use our findings in order to tell The Story of Gillfield Wood. We now have a free leaflet that summarises its history but this is our attempt to tell the fuller story – although we continue to explore, survey, record, research and write. We hope you enjoy learning about this delightful wood.



INTRODUCTION

Gillfield Wood, a long sinuous crescent in shape, is around 20 - 30 acres of mainly deciduous mixed woodland. It lies south of the parish of Totley, a fairly affluent suburb at the south-western edge of the city of Sheffield. Until the 1930s however, Totley was in Derbyshire and originally a small, poorish hamlet. It is bordered on the north and south by a patchwork of irregular shaped fields, mostly pasture land. Above it to the south is a high ridgeway connecting Sheffield, Bradway and Holmesfield to Killamarsh and beyond, and the ancient farmland landscape of the Cordwell Valley. North and west is the high gritstone moorland of The Peak District National Park, including the nearby Totley Moss and Big Moor with their important Bronze Age sites. The wood lies on the coal measures, only just across a geological border with the high millstone grit country.

Through most of its length is the delightfully meandering Totley Brook. Lower, beyond the wood, this joins with the Old Hay Brook to form the River Sheaf - from which the city of Sheffield takes its name. These two brooks and the Sheaf were important in early industrial history of Sheffield and Derbyshire as they were dammed for water mills – producing lead, cutlery, scythes, paper and corn. The Totley Brook now forms a boundary between Sheffield and Derbyshire. From at least medieval times it was also a manorial boundary with Holmesfield – which is still in Derbyshire. Like the brook, the wood too was important in early industrial history producing white coal and charcoal for the smelting of lead, and later wood for pit props and for chemical bi-products involved in glass making. It was also coppiced for agricultural products such as fencing, hedge-laying and for other crafts and industries such as besom broom making and tanning. It was almost clear felled during the Second World War, possibly to contribute towards the war effort. Much information about the past ownership, management and uses of the wood have been uncovered through our archaeological surveys and by our archival research.

The wood has one main footpath along its length and is crossed by three other main footpaths – to the immediate North leading to old Totley village and the seventeenth century Totley Hall; to the south to the tiny settlements of Woodthorpe and its seventeenth century Hall, to the sixteenth century Fanshawe Gate Hall and to the ancient farmstead of Storth House.



Though since the mid twentieth century the wood has mainly been used recreationally - by walkers, picnickers, dog owners and bird spotters – its older story is intimately connected with old Totley Village. Here were yeoman and peasant farmers, labourers, charcoal and whitecoal burners, woodsmen, craftspeople and smelters who used and managed it for sustainable wood and timber. Here were trespassers who stole holly for fodder, oak branches for the fire. Often more distant were the nobility and industrialists who owned it and made their money exploiting its resources and labour for agriculture and industry – particularly the metal industries of Sheffield and Derbyshire. The wood and its immediate landscape harbours many ghosts of the

people who worked there. It has been our task, through rigorous survey and research to try to uncover their stories. Let them - and the wood - speak!

AN ANCIENT WOOD

Though largely felled on the Totley and Yorkshire side in the 1940s and replanted in the 1960s, Gillfield is an ‘ancient wood.’ Ancient woods account for less than 2% of woods in Britain - but Sheffield has around 38 of them and in South Yorkshire there are around a staggering 350. The nearby North Derbyshire landscape is also full of ancient woodland. Ancient woods have protection from development and destruction – though currently this seems to be becoming less binding. They are irreplaceable as they are much more than just their trees – though of course these too are valuable evidence of a wood’s history and ecological importance.

An ancient wood is one that is evidenced as dating from before 1600 - it is thought that it is only after this date that woods began to be planted. Ancient semi-natural woodland is the most important habitat type in the UK in relation to the numbers of species supported. Some woodland types are well represented in Britain but scarce in Europe, including woods with bluebell-dominated ground flora - such as Gillfield Wood (the UK holds 20% of the world's population of bluebells). Veteran trees are important for the many niches they provide for birds, bats, mammals and the



dead wood habitats they provide for fungi and invertebrates.



outgrown coppiced tree

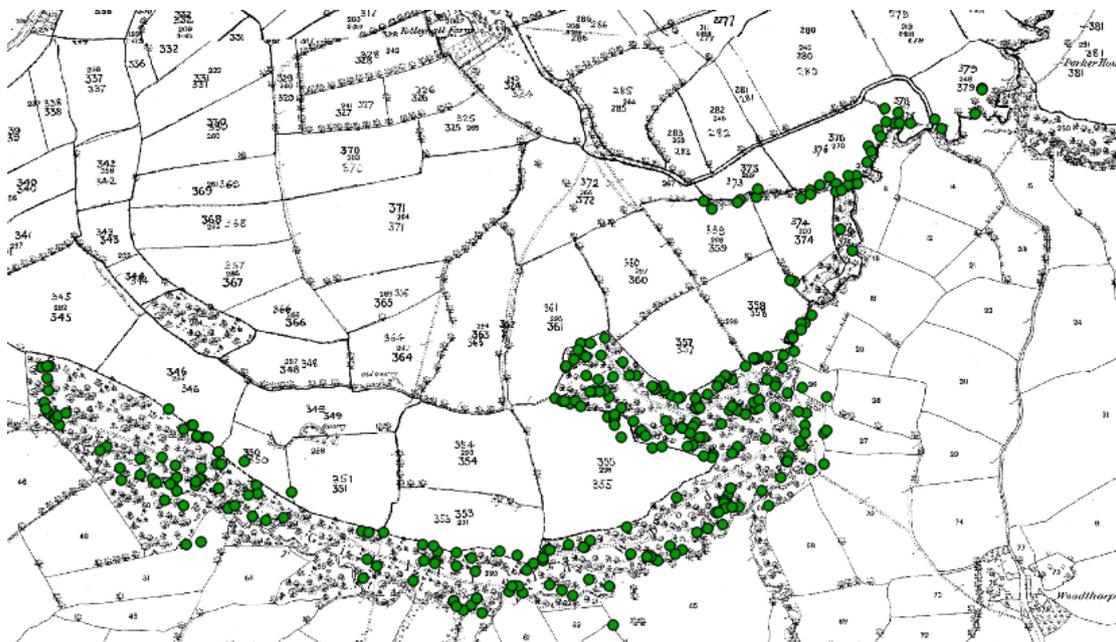
Though largely felled and replanted in the mid twentieth century, we have found documentary, archaeological, landscape and ecological evidence to prove that Gillfield is indeed an ancient wood.

The first document to name the wood is a 1561 survey - a ‘terrier’ of lands under lease in the parish of Dronfield - of which Totley was a part. Here, Gillfield Wood - owned first by Frances the Fifth Earl of Shrewsbury and then by George, the Sixth Earl of Shrewsbury - is leased to John Calton or Cawton of Totley and referred to as ‘a springe wood called Jyll felde.’¹ A ‘spring wood’ was nothing to do with the seasons, but means it was a ‘coppice-with-standards.’ These woods were usually

¹ DDP/70/28 Nottinghamshire Archives. We are grateful to David Hey for bringing this document to our attention. There is also a transcript of the Totley section by Brian Edwards in Totley History Group Archives

compartmented and actively managed, with most trees cut at ground level on a regular cycle – often at 20 year intervals - and allowed to spring back or re-grow to give a continuous supply of wood. Some, the standards, were allowed to grow as single stemmed trees.

Round the woodland fringes, on steep ground by the brook and on the Derbyshire side, the wood retains many veteran, ancient and worked (coppiced or pollarded) trees – oak, field maple, holly, sycamore for example. Our archaeological surveys have recorded these as well as recording stumps of large trees and coppice stools. It was estimated by experts supporting us in our surveys – Professor Ian Rotherham and Dr Paul Ardron - that some of these are at least 400 years old. These trees take us back in time to around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when, as we shall see later, this coppice wood was at the height of its exploitation for fuelling the Derbyshire lead industry.



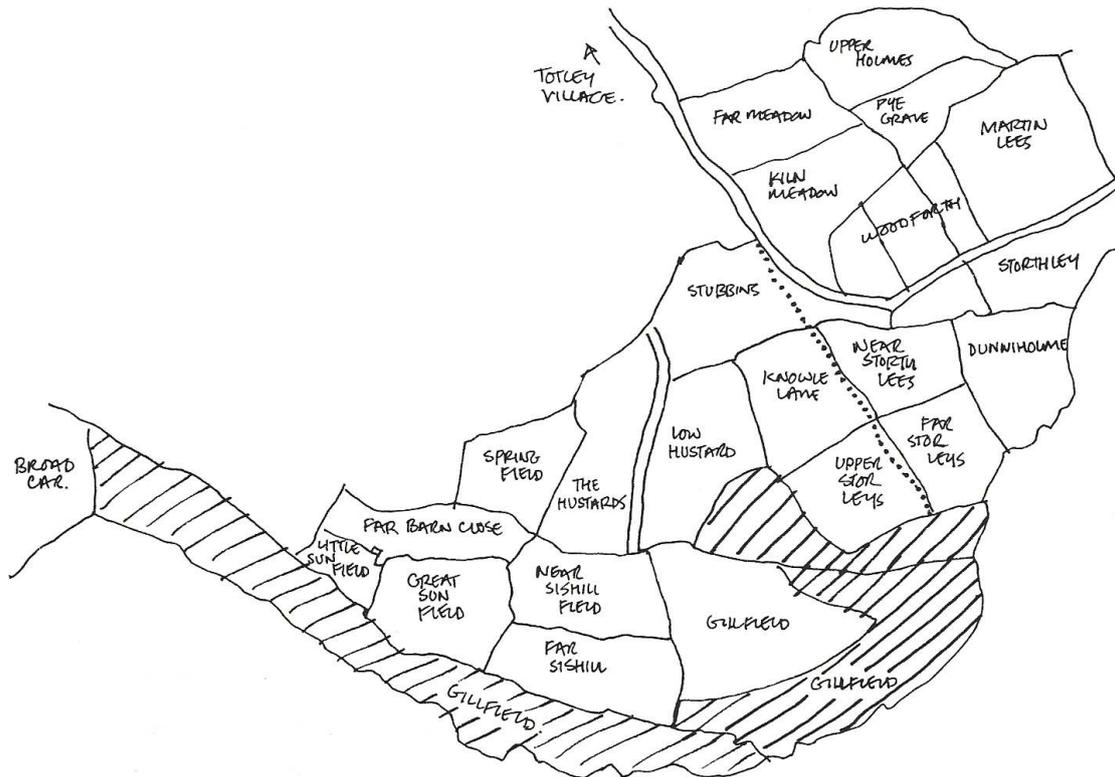
Trees and stumps more than 1 metre in diameter recorded and mapped by our survey

But even if we had no documentary evidence of a pre 1600 date, the very shape of the wood and its position give us valuable clues. The wood is at the edge of Totley – the Totley Brook running through it marks a manorial boundary with Holmesfield. Where woodland is cleared or ‘assarted’ for agriculture, probably in the medieval period or even before, it tends to be towards a parish or manorial boundary. The woods sinuous shape surrounded by small irregular fields or ‘closes’, is the result of this piecemeal ‘assarting.’ An aerial photograph shows this ancient woodland shape and parts of the ‘ghost’ wood – the hedgerows that are the remnants of this process. Rough dating has been done on the hedgerows and they are almost certainly several hundred years old, perhaps taking us back to the medieval or Tudor eras.

But there is further evidence – many of the field names near the wood are of Norse or Anglo Saxon origin and give us clues that these fields were once woodland, for example ‘Stubbins’ meaning a field with stumps; ‘Storth Lees’ meaning a piece of cleared woodland. The ‘ley’ in Totley also means a woodland clearing.



Aerial photograph showing the “ghost wood”



Map by Brian Edwards detailing the ancient field names which show that they were once woodland: Storch Leys, Stubbins, Woodforth, Martin Lees.

Lastly, much of the flora found in the wood are ‘ancient woodland indicator species’ – wood anemones, bluebells, wood sorrel, yellow archangel for instance and many species of fern. These are all species that tell us that this is likely to be an ancient wood. Barry Wright, an expert in this field, has been surveying the flora in the wood

with us and this may reveal yet more evidence about its age and management in the past.



Wood Anemones – an ‘ancient woodland indicator’ species.

THE FIRST SETTLERS AND INVADERS

After the last Ice Age, much of Britain became covered in trees. Then from about 3500BC, Neolithic, followed by Bronze and Iron Age farmers, began the process of clearing this ‘wildwood.’² This clearing for agriculture – perhaps in Totley too – was probably a gradual process.

There was warmer weather than at present during parts of the early Bronze Age - from about 2000BC - and no peat on nearby high ground as proved by Bronze Age field systems found in areas which are now high bleak moorland at nearby Big Moor. There are also numerous Bronze Age cairns and several stone circles there and on Totley Moss. We have no clear evidence about the nature of the wood from this time. However, in nearby Ecclesall Woods there is a cup and ring marked stone dating from the Bronze Age. We wonder if a distinctive, similar shaped, possibly worked stone, next to the path and the Totley Brook (and therefore the manorial boundary) in Gillfield Wood may be a similar artefact. No markings are evident but we do have anecdotal evidence that this large stone was used as a convenient sitting place in the

² Wildwood is a term coined by woodland academic Oliver Rackham and now widely used.

1940's and possibly centuries before that.³ Perhaps all evidence was rubbed off by many backsides!



Gillfield Wood Stone



Ecclesall Woods Stone with rock art

By the time the Romans arrived some of the British ‘wildwood,’ possibly up to 40%, had already been cleared. In 1971 a Roman coin from the time of the Emperor Claudius was found towards the east end of the wood near the important disused holloway or old packhorse road crossing the Totley Brook. This was part of a main Sheffield – Whirlow – Dore – Totley – Holmesfield – Peak District route.⁴ (It must be remembered that before the building of the turnpike route in 1818 through Totley and Abbeydale, no road existed along the Sheaf Valley.) Perhaps the coin is some evidence that this ancient route, crossing near the bottom of the wood, was used as early as the Roman era or even earlier. This is given added credence by the recent archaeological digs at Whirlow near the continuation of this route at Fenny Lane, another deep holloway where remains of a 2nd century Roman supply centre have been recently found as well as much Roman pottery. This route at Fenny Lane may have also linked into the main Roman road from Brough in the Hope Valley to Ringinglow and the Roman Fort at Templeborough east of Sheffield.⁵

Thanks to one of our supporting experts, Dr Paul Ardron, tentative evidence of Romano-British field systems – that is possible lynchets on flatter ground - were found at two sites in Gillfield Wood during the archaeological surveys – in an area at the far west end near the wood’s boundary wall and in the large piece of flat peninsula woodland towards the north-eastern end of the wood.

We have no evidence of the wood in the post Roman era through the times of Anglo Saxon and Norse settlement. However, as previously pointed out, many of the fieldnames around the wood date from this era.

³ Jean Smithson; piece sent to Totley History Group; published Totley Independent, June 2011, No 344

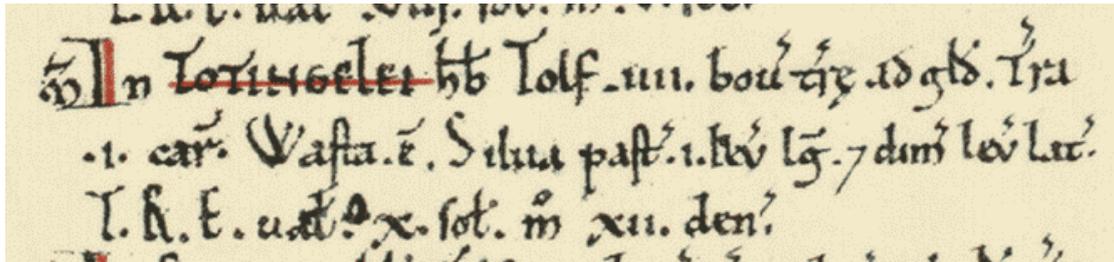
⁴ Coin now in Sheffield Museum. Brian Edwards in his research says: date on coin recorded “As of Claudius AE Minerva AD41” and found in July 1971. Claudius was the uncle of Caligula and was declared Emperor on 25 Jan 41. He was succeeded by Nero his 17 year old adopted son. Julius Caesar had landed in Britain with 10,000 troops some 14 years before. In 43 AD the Romans invaded again with 40,000 troops and it is known that they were in this area within that period.

⁵ http://www.archaeologicalresearchservices.com/projects/whirlowpdfs/Whirlow_Heritage_Trail.pdf

THE MEDIEVAL WOOD

It is estimated that only 15% of England was wooded by the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086.⁶ The Domesday Book describes the Manor of Totley (Totinglei) as belonging to one of the King's Thanes and says:

“In Totinglei, Tolf had IV bovates of land hidable, land for one plough. It is waste, wood, pasturable, 1 mile in length and half mile in breadth. T.R.E. value X shillings, now XI pence.”



A “King’s Thane” in Anglo Saxon England was a high ranking, rich and powerful man, although this position became gradually devalued after the Conquest. Possibly his name, Tolf, is Scandinavian in origin. It appears as if he held the Manor of Totley, including woodland, before the Norman Conquest.

The Domesday entry describes the wood as “pasturable,” that is locals were allowed at certain times to let animals into the wood to forage, especially pigs to eat acorns in the Autumn. This permission to pasture swine was known as “pannage.” Whether all or some of this pasturable wood is Gillfield is unproved - but certainly possible.



Until its naming in a document of 1561, we have only tantalising and inconclusive

⁶ Oliver Rackham; Woodlands p. 116; Collins New Naturalist’s Library 2006

evidence about the wood.

In 1280 we have an intriguing document – a land deed in Latin in which the “rivulum de Totley” – the Totley Brook, which runs through the wood - is mentioned. The deed is between “John son of Thomas of Holm” (probably Holmesfield) to “Peter de Bernis” (Bernis was an area in Picardy so Peter will probably have been gentry of Norman extraction). He is transferring “a piece of land called the le Stord” “lying near the Totley Brook” “and abutting on the lands of Simon de Vodethorp” (Woodthorpe).⁷ Le Stord may be a place name – a piece of cleared woodland – or it may be the fields north of the wood called variously Stors or Storth. Alternatively it may refer to Storth House, an ancient farm on Moorwoods Lane near the west end of the wood, or wooded or cleared pieces of land lower down the Brook – near the “Totley Chemical Yard” - or just around the confluence of the Totley and Old Hay Brooks. However, another theory is that this may be the wood itself, ‘Stord’ or ‘Storth’ being English (Anglo Saxon) for wood. It fits – with Woodthorpe to the South and the position next to the Totley Brook. However, this is very tentative but merits further research. If “le Stord” *is* the wood, then this would be the earliest reference we have to it.



The Totley Brook in Gillfield Wood

In 1317 there is a legal transfer of land in Totynleye (Totley) between two important Derbyshire landowners - from Henry de Ireton and his wife Elizabeth to Stephen le Eyr (Eyre) of Cestrefield (Chesterfield). This consisted of:

⁷ S. O. Addy transcription; Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, Vol 3, 1881 p 101f. - but still in Latin. Find this online at <http://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/publications.html>

“3 messuages, 6 bovates of land, 10 acres of meadow, 20 acres of wood, 6s. 8d. rent, and a moiety of a cottage.”⁸

Again, there is no proof that this wood was Gillfield.

THE WOOD IN THE TUDOR ERA

The Tudor era saw great changes. The population had gradually increased since the devastation of the Black Death in 1348-50 and the gap between rich and poor widened. It saw a departure from the feudal systems of agriculture and the rise of the yeoman farmer in Totley and Dore as elsewhere – yeoman farmers being those who held their own land and ran their farms as businesses. Of course, it was also the time when England becomes a Protestant country, the monasteries (such as locally at Beauchief Abbey) are dissolved and their lands redistributed to the wealthy. Land all over the country begins to be enclosed by owners and manorial lords. Locally, it was also a time that saw the huge expansion of the Derbyshire lead industry as an international trade.

The first firm documentary evidence of the wood is from this time - a document of 1561 – a ‘terrier’ or survey of the former lands of the Chantry Guild of St Mary and St John the Baptist at Dronfield. Chantries were often established in the medieval period by a wealthy person or persons, who gave funds (often rents on land) to pay for a priest to say prayers or sing masses in a chantry chapel often for the perpetual spiritual benefit of deceased ancestors. A foundation charter usually laid down conditions for ensuring the exact and proper use of the endowment throughout the years to come. Sometimes the funds were also used for charitable purposes. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII in 1534, there were subsequent Acts under Edward VI for the dissolution of such chantry guilds and their chapels. This led to commissioners being appointed by the Crown to survey their possessions, including the land which provided the Guilds with income through rents. Surveyed lands were redistributed or sold on by the King – hence the need for this terrier. In this case “Jyll felde” wood was part of lands transferred by the King to the Earl of Shrewsbury. In the document, we find that the wood is leased by the Earl to John Calton or Cawton of Totley:

“One close of pasture and Springe woode called Jyll felde buttynge of the est of mychell croft and of the west and northe of Mr Frances and of the sowthe of Johne Fanshawe.”⁹

The document says that John Calton has:

“a house of three bays, stone thatched, and a barn of four bays, thatched with straw, an orchard and a garden.”

⁸ WH Hart FSA; Transcript in Derbyshire Archaeological Journal Vol 17 p106 Jan 1895; Fines for the Co of Derby from their commencement in the reign of Richard 1st. It is not clear where Hart found the original documents. This Henry de Ireton may have been one who lived at Ireton Parva, Kedleston, Derbyshire and was an ancestor of the Cromwellian General Henry Ireton. Stephen le Eyr will have been one of the gentry – the Eyre family of Derbyshire.

⁹ Nottinghamshire Archives DDP/70/28. We are grateful to David Hey for bringing this document to our attention. There is also a transcript by Brian Edwards in Totley History Group Archives

Judging by the size of his house – a cottage would be only a simple one bay dwelling - John is a comparatively well off farmer.

What else have we discovered about John Calton, this Totley farmer who leases the wood? We have his will and inventory of 1579¹⁰ in which, as well as the usual possessions – sheep, cows, pigs, geese, ploughing oxen, carts, crops, furniture and household items, wool for spinning and weaving - he leaves 8 silver spoons to his wife Grace – again showing that he is relatively well off. It appears that John Barker, gentleman of Dore, left him the lease of some land when he died and John Calton also leaves this to Grace along with land in Heeley in Sheffield. 3s.4d is left to a servant, Christopher Buxtone. We also know from the Totley section of the 1561 terrier or survey that:

“Johne Cawton and Johne Raworth holdeth at the will of the Lord one sithe where other wayse called Blyth Whele”

so he leases a mill from the Earl too.

We know from an earlier lease that a previous John Calton had the “walk mill” (a fulling mill for cloth, situated around the site of the present Dore and Totley Station) from the Abbot of Beauchief Abbey in 1516.¹¹ The document also names a son, John. Was this our John Calton’s father or grandfather? Perhaps it is the same mill?

There is also a grant of 1561 from Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall in Nottinghamshire to either a John Calton or John Dalton, smelter:

“Grant of one acre of waste ground to John Calton [*or Dalton*], smelter of Totley Bents to erect a dwelling house and barn paying to the Queen eight pence by the comfort and agreement of George Earl of Shrewsbury and John Barker of Dore Esquire.”¹²

So if this is our man, he was also a lead smelter. Smelting was still at this time a rough and ready process carried out on windy ‘bole’ hills. We have found reference to a servant of Francis the 5th Earl of Shrewsbury paying £14 to a John Cauton or Calton to fire up a bole hill in November 1553. Ten years later he was boling for George the 6th Earl in Eyam.¹³ If this is our John Calton, did the Earl lease Gillfield Wood to him so that he had a supply of wood for their lead smelting activities on bole hills? It would have been convenient for Totley’s nearby bole hill, up on moorland

¹⁰ David Hey (ed); *Seke in Body but Hole in Mind* - one of a number of wills and inventories listed. Full transcripts kept by Dore Village Society Archives. Originals in Lichfield Joint Record Office.

¹¹ David Hey et al (edit) cited in *A Monastic Community in Local Society: The Beauchief Abbey Cartulary, 1516 Indenture, lease between John Norton Abbot of Beauchief and Convent and John Calton of Totley - the “Walke Milne house and mill and lands to it and to Margaret his wife and Omfrey and John their children. For their lives and 80 years. 20/- p.a. Rights to use the land.”* Sheffield Archives, Beauchief Muniments 1013, fo.5

¹² Nottingham Univ. Library MiE 1/1/120, 20 April 1561

¹³ David Kiernan; *The Derbyshire Lead Industry in the Sixteenth Century* who cites the reference as PRO, SP1/244, ff 28-75

near Strawberry Lee and Totley Moss. Did the Earl and John Barker also let him build himself a house on Totley Bents?

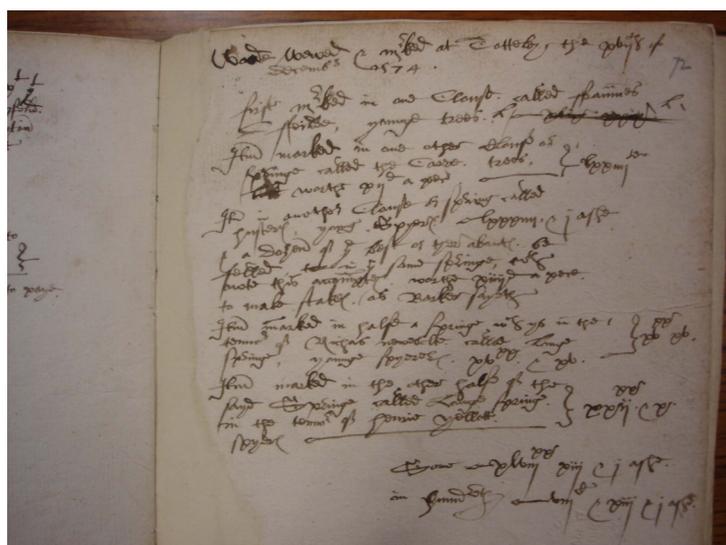
Whatever the case, he is definitely a farmer with other enterprises – a largish house, a farm, the lease of a wood, at least one mill and possibly he is also a smelter for the Earl. He is also alive in Tudor England at the time that many farmers are becoming much wealthier – running their farms as a proper businesses and taking every opportunity to diversify and build themselves new houses. A largeish fish in a small pond!

Of course he may have put the products of the wood to other uses – fencing, stakes, hedge bindings, fuel, possibly even the timber for the crucks to build his house.

This brings us on nicely to the next document that is concerned with the wood. This is dated 1574 – still at the time that George, the Sixth Earl of Shrewsbury, owns the wood and is Lord of the Manor in Totley. The Earl is also one of the highest peers in the land and Lord of Hallamshire with one of his seats being Sheffield Castle. Of course he is most famously Mary Queen of Scot’s reluctant gaoler - she is imprisoned up at Manor Lodge in Sheffield and at Chatsworth - and Bess of Hardwick’s unhappy husband. He is also set around this time, to become the country’s biggest lead producer. The 1574 document is a scruffy page from the notebook of the Earl’s right hand man - William Dickenson, the Bailiff of Hallamshire – a very important person indeed.¹⁴ Professor Melvyn Jones provided us with a transcription of this document – Dickenson having terrible handwriting! This page is headed:

“Woode vewed and marked at Totteley the 17th of December 1574.”

In it Dickenson is valuing wood to be felled and coppiced that winter. There are many interesting things to be learned from this document, In it, Dickenson names what must be compartments of the wood: “Fraunces Fields,” “the Carre trees,” “Husters” and “Long Springe.”



William Dickenson’s notebook itemising wood to be felled in 1574

¹⁴ Sheffield Archives MD192, Fol 72 1574

Locally several fields are still known or have been known as Frances Fields (including the two current allotment sites in Totley) and these belonged to an absentee landlord at this time, a Mr Frances of Foremark in South Derbyshire. There is no knowing quite where this piece of woodland was.

‘Carre’ is an old Norse word (*kjarr*) meaning a wood on marshy ground so this compartment could be at Broad Carr, the very west end of the wood - near where the bus terminus is now - next to Baslow Road. Another contender is the field below Aldam Way towards the east end, still wet with alder and yellow flag which prefer these conditions. Yet another might be the large peninsula shaped piece of wood towards the north-east where our archaeological surveys have revealed that there have been many attempts at drainage.

The compartment called ‘Husters’ may alternatively refer to this same wooded peninsula or land nearby previously wooded as field names here (in the 1561 survey) are ‘The Hustards.’

‘Long Springe’ aptly describes the shape of the main wood. ‘Springe’ of course means that this was a coppice wood.



Possible box drain on the edge of the wet woodland peninsula

Tenants and owners are also named. We have already mentioned Mr Frances. Another name is Barker. The Barkers have long been important gentry in Dore and Totley – a Barker has his coat of arms in the early seventeenth century Totley Hall. But here we have a job knowing which Barker is referred to. His importance is implied - the document says that 84 young spyers (ie young oaks about 20 years old – the usual length of a coppice cycle) are to be felled “to make stakes as Barker sayeth.” Brian Edwards in his research mentions a 1578 will of a John Barker, yeoman farmer of Totley, who died in 1578. He had:

“4 messuages, one cottage, Bentley Close, 100 acres of wood, 40 acres of meadow, 100 acres of pasture, 20 of waste.”¹⁵

However, there is a will of a “John Barker, of Dore, gent” who died in 1577¹⁶ probably at Dore Hall (possibly the same John who left or leased land to John Calton) so he is yet another contender - or even possibly the same man. Lastly, the Earl’s man on the ground managing his lead mill at Old Hay in Totley, documented a little later in 1585, was one Arthur Barker and so there is a possibility it could have been him - although he wouldn’t have been particularly bothered about stakes! More research is needed.

Nichas Newebolte – or Nicholas Newbould – is named as a tenant of the wood who has 315 ‘spyers’ marked in half of Long Springe. From his 1580 will and inventory it appears that he is a local farmer and ‘corveyser’ or shoemaker of some means, tenanting his farmland from Mr Frances.¹⁷ This land is mentioned in his will. Did he use bark from the trees for tanning leather?

Henry Yellot – or Elliot or Elliot - tenants the other half of Long Springe and has marked 450 ‘spyers.’ Two local farmers had this name – one dying in 1580 and another in 1608, probably father and son. In 1584 this younger Henry Yellot, a yeoman farmer, was fined by Holmesfield parish ‘for carrying holly bowes into another Lordship.’¹⁸ This probably means he was taking holly, a valuable fodder crop, from the other side of the Totley Brook in the wood, the brook being a manorial boundary between Totley and Holmesfield. In his will he leaves ‘an axe, a hatchet and Certen olde iron.’¹⁹ Perhaps this was the axe used to chop at the holly!

It appears, from studying the Brian Edwards archive that land around this part of Totley had three owners at this time - a Mr Barker, Mr Francis of Foremark and the Earl of Shrewsbury. It is interesting that even into the seventeenth and eighteenth century after Totley Hall was built in 1623, the Totley Estate was in three parts. This will require further research to see if land here is passed on in the same three parts throughout this long period.

What uses was this coppiced wood being put to? 973 trees are marked for felling and valued. It is clear that Mr Barker says some are to be stakes, presumably for fencing. But it is important enough that William Dickenson, the Bailiff of Hallamshire - and presumably a very busy and important man - comes out personally to count and value the ‘spyers.’ The fascinating thing about the date of this document is that it is almost exactly contemporary with the date that the lead smelting technology changes from the rough and ready use of bole hills to the more efficient use of bellows and hearths using water power in smelting mills. This new technology is a large part of the reason

¹⁵ Brian Edwards, Research Archive, Totley History Group. He cites the reference Sheffield Archives, Dr. Pegge.

¹⁶ David Hey (ed); *Seke in Body but Hole in Mind* - one of a number of wills and inventories listed here. Full transcripts kept by Dore Village Society Archives. Originals in Lichfield Joint Record Office.

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ Holmesfield Court Rolls; transcribed in *Derbyshire Arch Journal* Vol 20; available online at <http://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/publications.html>

¹⁹ *Seke in Body*, *ibid*

that the Derbyshire lead industry booms at this time and becomes an international trade. This new technology was introduced from the Mendips, approximately four years earlier in around 1570 – and very locally at nearby Beauchief by William Humfrey.²⁰ Humfrey tried to patent the new method and a great dispute developed, particularly with the Earl of Shrewsbury and others, who were trying to take advantage of it for their own lead interests. The Earl was the foremost entrepreneur and industrialist of his day with interests in lead, iron, coal, millstones and wool. Eventually Humfrey was unable to keep control of his invention and the great era of Derbyshire lead smelting and production begins with the Earl in the forefront. David Kiernan says:

“In the space of fifteen years a small scale localised industry wedded to primitive smelting technology producing mainly for domestic market transformed into overseas trade – only second to cloth in value of exports.”

Over succeeding years, many local gentry and yeoman farmers get in on the act and it is at this time that a lot of the North Derbyshire Halls are built out of this new lead money – possibly, dare we suggest, even Totley Hall itself in 1623, though this is not proved.

To fire the smelting mills, a great quantity of fuel was needed. Gillfield Wood, other woods in the South of Sheffield such as Ecclesall Woods together with many woods in North Derbyshire - including our neighbouring Holmesfield Park Wood - were coppiced in order to make whitecoal as a smelting fuel. Whitecoal is wood with all the moisture driven out and in order to make it, circular kilns with a channel pointing downhill were constructed in these local woods and lined with stone. They are sometimes also known as Q-pits. Between the 1570s and the later eighteenth century whitecoal was mixed with a small amount of charcoal and used to fire the ore hearths in mills provided with bellows worked by a water wheel, charcoal on its own burning too hot for the smelting process. The lead was therefore smelted where there were woods to provide whitecoal and charcoal and fast-flowing streams and rivers that could be dammed to provide water power. Dore and Totley and its brooks fitted these requirements exactly. The lead was mined in the limestone areas of the Peak District where there were few coppice woods.²¹

In our archaeological survey in Gillfield Wood we have identified approximately thirty circular pits thought to be the remains of whitecoal kilns. There may be more. These are the most important archaeological evidence we have of the wood's connection with the Derbyshire lead industry showing that the wood was being intensively coppiced and sustainably managed for this whitecoal production.

The Earl began smelting lead using the new technology at Chatsworth in the early 1570s and became the biggest and most important producer. Of his mills, the Totley smelting mill at Old Hay was the largest at this time. In 1585 we have a letter from his servant John Booth, who was in charge of the production side of the Earl's lead business, which refers to this mill:

²⁰ David Kiernan, *The Derbyshire Lead Industry in the Sixteenth Century* p126 and Chapter 5

²¹ Mel Jones in his many books on woodland history explains this process. See bibliography.

“That milne will make about 300 fotheres leade in one year, it is pittie that ther is not wood to maintaine it, being the most commodious milne in Derbyshire...”²²

So at this time the Earl was struggling to get enough wood in the form of whitecoal for his mill. No wonder he was keen to exploit Gillfield as a nearby wood - and to buy up more woods if he could. John Booth informs him in the same letter that he has purchased “Mr Whitworth’s woods by Woodhouse Hall” (probably Dronfield



Woodhouse) but regretted that Mr Savage of Holmesfield Park (Holmesfield Park Wood) would not sell.²³ Kiernan wonders if Mr Savage was getting better offers from other local smelters.²⁴

Learning to measure a whitecoal kiln during our survey of the wood



Pits recorded in our survey of Gillfield Wood – about 30 of these are thought to be whitecoal kilns

²² David Kiernan; *The Derbyshire Lead Industry in the Sixteenth Century*; cites Sheffield Archives ACM 2/75

²³ Sheffield Archives BFM/2/75 Letter 28 Apr 1585 Cited by David Kiernan

²⁴ David Kiernan, *The Derbyshire Lead Industry in the Sixteenth Century*

But back to 1574 and William Dickenson's scribbled account of coppice ready for felling in Gillfield Wood. The date of this document may be slightly early in the development of the new technology for the Earl to be exploiting the wood to fuel his water powered lead mills - although he was certainly experimenting with it at this time. But there is no doubt that he would require wood whichever technology he was using – bole hills or water powered smelting hearths. As we have seen, thirteen years earlier in 1561 he may have already had one of his bole smelters – John Calton of Totley - leasing our wood. The earliest record we have of the Totley mill at Old Hay is the above letter of 1585 but it may have been built earlier. The Earl also had enormous requirements for wood in the form of charcoal for his extensive iron smelting activities. Definite evidence of charcoal hearths at two sites in Gillfield Wood have also been discovered with the help of two of our experts, Dr Paul Ardron and Professor Ian Rotherham - and a local mole which had thrown up some charcoal! The Earl was the owner of many woods in the Sheffield area at this time in order to fuel his metal making industries.

Lead ore was brought into Totley from the Peak District by pack horse and much processed lead was taken out of Totley to the inland port at Bawtry – with a wharf owned by the Earl of Shrewsbury. But the routes could prove difficult at times, not only in the winter months. In May 1585 Robert Booth, the Earl's servant tells the Earl that Arthur Barker, the Earl's man at the Old Hay Mill in Totley had:

“hired fifteen fothers of lead to be carried to Oulcottes which is two miles short of Bawtrie for 7s per fother the waies whither wher never sene in these daies so foule.”²⁵



Still used section of Holloway to Woodthorpe

A holloway is a deep ancient path worn away through centuries of traffic – carts, horses and feet. We have already mentioned the important north/south holloway – often mentioned in old documents as “The King's Highway” - which crosses towards the eastern end of the current wood. What is interesting locally is that in places this old holloway, together with the other connecting paths, have quite unusual old paving. This is not constructed of big stone slabs but a sort of crazy paving of small stones to help improve the surface.

To the north, our holloway passed through what are currently the gardens of houses on Rowan Tree Dell – old oaks still mark the now filled in ‘ditch’ though one house has

made a feature of it with Japanese bridges! A stone post is also visible in one garden. This route curved into Totley



²⁵ David Kiernan ibid p207 – cites ref Sheffield Archives ACM 2/78

Hall Lane – within living memory a deep holloway at the Totley Hall end – through old Totley village (whose ancient axis was north/south), through the deep still used road of Old Hay Lane and onto Dore, Whirlow and Sheffield. To the south it forded the Totley Brook and a currently disused section joins the magical and deep old holloway up to Woodthorpe Hall where this paving can be seen very clearly. Above it is a parallel path presumably constructed when the bottom path became too muddy and wet. It continued south along a very deep section - Hob Lane alongside Holmesfield Park Wood - and on south or making connections with routes west to the lead mines of the Peak District. This route can be clearly seen on old OS maps and even on one of the earliest maps – Burdett’s Map of Derbyshire of 1767. The route also joined with the route up to Bradway called Totley Lane which has no less than three parallel paths, the deepest one unused but still visible. This lead up to the high ridgeway at Bradway (itself meaning ‘broad way’). A route out of Gillfield Wood via the first, most easterly bridge climbs a field known locally as Shep’s Bank. This is often extremely muddy too and remains of old paving can be seen here too (see photograph). More old paving is visible on a path near Little Wood.

THE WOOD 1600 - 1800

The Totley estates and mills passed over to local gentry and important families from Derbyshire and Sheffield over the years – the Brights of Sheffield, the Eyres of Hassop, the Burtons of Holmesfield to name but a few.

In the seventeenth century there were at least three, lead mills in Totley. A 1650 survey stated:

“In Totley are three smilting houses, one cole mine and one paper milne, in Dore three smilting houses and one cole mine and one corne milne.”²⁶

The Totley sites were at Old Hay, The Wash or Hall’s House near Totley Rise and Owtram’s - perhaps another mill on the Totley Brook. Evidence for the latter is that in 1615 Leonard Gill and Thomas Hall who had The Wash at Totley Rise complained that Edward Outram had built a smelter whose weir harmed the operation of their mill. The Outram smelter appears to have been upstream on the Totley Brook for it was stated that the watercourse to The Wash flowed through Outram’s land on which he built his mill. This was at an unknown site though we wonder whether perhaps this was on the site of the present ‘Totley Chemical Yard’ – though because this is on the east bank of the Totley Brook, it is officially in Bradway.²⁷

One of the Dore sites was at Nether Mill (now gone due to the building of Totley Brook Road) just across the Old Hay Brook from Totley. There were other mills on the Limb Brook, in Holmesfield and the Cordwell Valley, further down the Sheaf and in the Peak District. (map).

White coal kilns have been found in many woods local to these mills, as well as Gillfield. Gillfield being so close to mills in Dore, Totley and Holmesfield and the

²⁶ Sheffield Archives Bagshaw 3191

²⁷ David Crossley; Water Power on the Sheffield Rivers, p 94. He cites Nottinghamshire Record Office DDP 109/1

Cordwell Valley will have been well placed to help supply these mills with white coal.

We have a will and inventory of an Edward Barker, gentleman, of Dore who died in 1615 and it is obvious from this that he was a mill owner and smelter. It's possible, though not yet proved, that his mill was Nether Mill.²⁸ In his inventory are listed:

“At the smylting house 2 payre of bellowes
4 smylting crowes, 1 ladle, 3 shooles, 1 stone axe, 6 hawckes, 4 pynnes, 1 bucket
1 payre of weights, 1 ladder, 1 tubb
Ashes, brockes and old wast
1 fother of lead
att the milne, 1arke, 1 gaflocke, 7 oicks, 1 cheesell, 1 strike, 1 pecke, 1 half pecke, 1
quarter, 1 half quarter, 3 siffes, 1 fanne, 1 axe
turves
woode and white coales
small coales at the pitt”²⁹

Crows are crowbars, shooles are presumably shovels, pynnes or pens were small hammers with sharpened ends. There were always weights to weigh the lead. So here we see something of not only the tools that the owner of a smelting mill possesses, but also that his “woode and white coales” and the “small coales at the pitt” have value. And if the white coal has value, so do the woods themselves to these lead producing Earls and local gentry.

But what of the ordinary people who lived close to the mills and more particularly those who worked in them? There is no doubt that the pollution will have brought about chronic illness and early death. Kiernan quotes William Wooley, a late seventeenth and early eighteenth century lead merchant:

“There is a corrosive sulphur in the ore, which flies up into the smelting – which occasions a disease among the smelters called the “belland”, known by difficulty of breathing, loss of appetite, yellowness of complexion, a dry cough and hoarsness, attended with swelling limbs and joints which are rendered useless; which is taken by working in the lead mines or the smell of the fumes of the ore in smelting. This distemper falls upon the horses and cows that eat grass or drink water at the mill. The other disease which is incident upon them is called “the byon”; the first is mostly incurable.”³⁰

More locally there is evidence of this poisoning affecting woodland, grass and animals near The Wash or Hall's House smelting mill at Totley Rise (Gill's mill in this quote). The wood affected will probably have been Poynton Wood. Kiernan says:

²⁸ David Crossley argues this, *ibid*

²⁹ David Hey (ed); *Seke in Body but Hole in Mind* - one of a number of wills and inventories listed here. Full transcripts kept by Dore Village Society Archives. Originals Lichfield Joint Record Office.

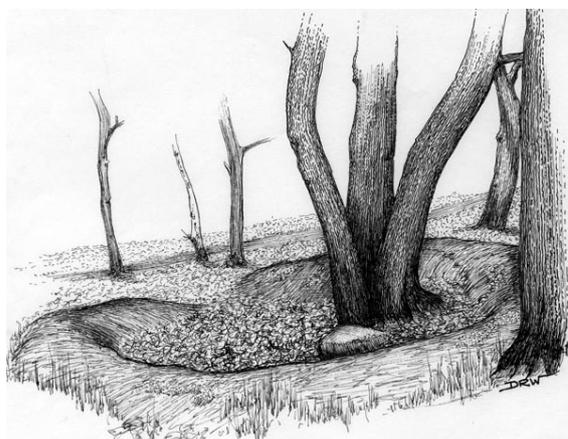
³⁰ C. Glover and P. Riden. (ed.) *William Woolley's History of Derbyshire*, Derbyshire Record Office 1981 p.179; quoted in Kiernan p148

“Around 1638 one Poynton of Norton complained of the nuisance caused by the smoke issuing from the chimneys of Gill's smelting mill. Poynton claimed that the lead fumes had killed not only the grass and the wood growing in the close, but also two horses and a cow which had pastured there.”³¹

In only 2003 gardens near the site of this mill had their top soil removed as it was found to be heavily contaminated with lead.

The next document we have that mentions woodland in Totley is the will of Stephen Bright of Carbrook who died in 1642. Bright was then the Bailiff of Hallamshire, looking after the Sheffield estates of the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke. Bright used the profits from his office as Bailiff to help purchase land, including the Manor of Totley in 1630 (pic of deed). In his will he asks Anthony Hadfield and Edward Gill, his brother-in-law and son-in-law to see to the education of his daughters and says that:

“They are to stand siesed of the first fall of spring wood in Ecclesall and Totley.”



White coal kiln or Q pit. (Drawing by Bob Warburton)

Bright was also involved in mining, smelting and shipping lead and owned the Wash Mill or Hall's House smelting mill at Totley Rise at this time. It was tenanted by Leonard Gill whose son was Edward Gill. Presumably the “fall”³² of this coppice wood would be used for making whitecoal to fuel this mill and perhaps others.

Some have thought that our wood is called Gillfield after the Gill family though our first document of 1561 naming it as ‘Jyll Felde’ obviously predates Leonard. This is not to say however that there weren't other ancestors of this family leasing land in Totley at this time or earlier. (Indeed one of Addy's transcribed early local medieval deeds names a Margeria Gilly in 1333.³³)

In 1653 John Bright, Stephen Bright's son sold the Manor of Totley to Michael Burton of Holmesfield Hall. In the list of land sold he includes “woodland called the Gillfield Wood” and two lead mills – Hall's House (at Totley Rise) and the smelting mill at Old Hay in Totley.³⁴ He had also bought the Manor of Dore in 1658 including two lead smelting mills. Presumably the Gillfield whitecoal, along with other woods, was used for fueling these mills at this date too.

³¹ Kiernan p. 158. His source is British Library Add MS 6676 f. 161.

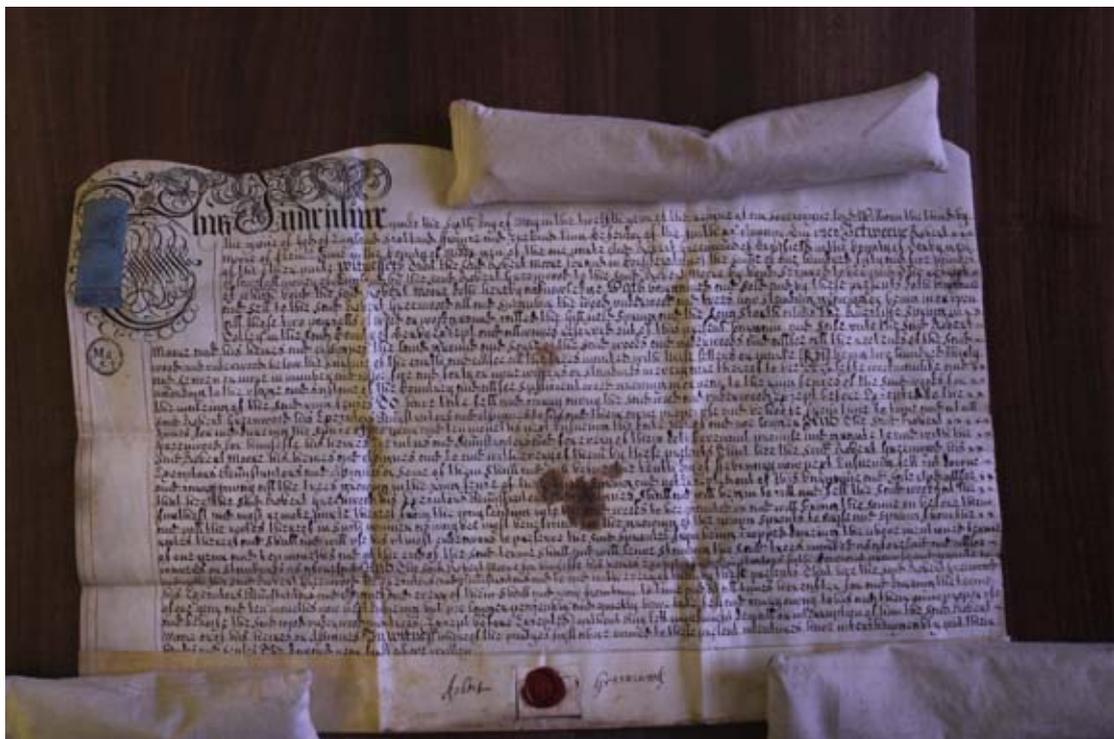
³² Mel Jones in “Gapping, Raddling and Snagging” (Wildtrack Publishing), defines a “fall” as a local word used to describe a compartment within a coppice wood. The word was also used, he says, to describe the felling of underwood (coppice) and timber in a particular place at a particular time or during a particular period.

³³ S. O. Addy transcription; Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, Vol 3, 1881 p 101f.

³⁴ Sheffield Archives Bagshawe C. 3192.

We have studied a document of 1700 that shows that at this time that the wood was still being coppiced for white coal to fuel the smelting of lead. This is a deed of sale of wood from Gillfield Wood by Robert Moore to Robert Greenwood, a lead smelter from Dronfield. (Robert Moore had purchased land in Totley in 1683 from Francis Burton, another Burton family member, also a lead smelter³⁵ and who was then Lord of Totley Manor. This included “Gillfield Spring” and “Newbould Spring.”) For £155 for 1 year and 10 months, Moore agreed to sell Greenwood:

“ the wood, underwood and trees now standing, growing or being in two parcels of wood or woody ground called the Gillfield Spring and the Long Storth alias Rucliffe Spring in Totley except and always reserved out of this present bargain all the trees marked with these letters RM being two hundred thirty and seven or more in number and allso five and forty or more wavers of standards in every area to be left woodmanlike and according to the rule and custom of the Country and allso sufficient wood standing or growing in or near the ring fences of the said woods for making of the said ring fences.”³⁶



Greenwood’s deed of sale

‘Reserves’ are usually trees more than about 20 – 25 years of age while ‘wavers’ are trees that have only grown through one coppice cycle and are therefore less than 20 – 25 years old. For centuries a red paint, made by mixing red ochre with oil, was used to mark trees not to be felled. The practice of marking was called ‘raddling’ or

³⁵ David Hey: The Houses of the Dronfield Lead Smelters and Merchants 1600 - 1730 cites Sheffield Archives MD184

³⁶ Matlock Record Office 1881/54/23

‘ruddling.’³⁷ Perhaps some of the 3 or 400 year old or so trees we have recorded still standing on the boundaries were part of the 1700 ring fence.



By the mid seventeenth century the Cupola furnace had taken over from the water powered ore smelting hearths – at Old Hay in 1737 and at Hall’s House at Totley Rise by 1750 and crucially these would have used coal rather than white coal as a fuel.

So we have around 200 years where Gillfield Wood owned as part of the Manor of Totley, first by the 6th Earl of Shrewsbury and later owned or leased by prominent local gentry who were all involved in lead smelting. Many of these had other local manors, woods and lead smelting mills too. We have archaeological evidence - in our woods and others - of Q pits or kilns thought to have been used for making white coal. We have documents - deeds of sale, wills and inventories that make links between the woods and the mills. What no one knows is quite how white coal was made.

Totley Hall



Not only is the history of the wood tied up with various Lords of the Manor and aristocratic lead smelters, but also with the owners and residents of Totley Hall and its estate. The Hall stands just to the north of the wood over fields by the ancient path from Totley Hall Lane which crosses the wood and leads on south to Holmesfield and beyond. It is thought probable that there may have been an earlier house on the site. This hall was built in 1623 and there is a date and initials over the door reading ‘GN 1623’ and some eroded initials thought to be ‘WM.’ The latter look as if they may have been added later.’ It is thought that GN was George Newbould of Ecclesall.³⁸ (It is interesting that Leonard Gill, the operator of the smelting mill at Totley Rise at this time, also built Norton Hall at exactly the same date of 1623.) However, the Newbould family were originally Totley yeoman farmers and shoemakers, at first leasing their land from Mr Frances of Foremark in South Derbyshire. We have the wills and inventories of several generations of the family revealing their gradual increase in wealth and land, probably partly achieved through marriage and partly through canny diversification with their shoe making business.³⁹ They seem to have acquired land in other areas – Handsworth Woodhouse, Dronfield and Holmesfield. George, who is described by 1645 as a yeoman of

³⁷ Information from Mel Jones in Gapping, Raddling and Snagging, p 51. Also, readers may be familiar with “Diggory Venn, the reddle man in Thomas Hardy’s ‘Return of the Native.’

³⁸ Brian Edwards, Drawings of Historic Totley and Research Archive, Totley History Group and many other sources.

³⁹ David Hey (ed); Seke in Body but Hole in Mind - one of a number of wills and inventories listed. Full transcripts kept by Dore Village Society Archives. Originals in Lichfield Joint Record Office.

Ecclesall, with Alice his wife, appears from a deed to have at this time

“two messuages, sixty acres of land and thirty acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture, 20 acres of wood, tenn acres of furzes & heath, common pasture for all cattel and common of Turbary (*ie right to cut peat*) with appurtenances in Totley and Dronfield.”⁴⁰



It is possible that the 20 acres of wood is Gillfield or part of it and that some of the farmland is that between the Hall and the wood.

According to our research the Totley Estate consisted of Totley Hall, two farms, and adjacent closes, and several pieces or parcels of woodland. Until it came together under the Coke family of Brookhill Hall, Pinxton, Notts. in 1791, the Estate was owned in three parts through most of the C17th and C18th.

In 1672, Henry Barber of London sold to Frances Burton of Dronfield the Manor and Manor House of Totley including land, manorial rights, woods and underwoods.⁴¹ In 1680 Robert Moore was leasing land here from Francis Burton, the then Lord of the Manor, and this included

“Hall Mansion House in Totley alias Tottingley now or late in the tenure of occupation of Christopher Yellot.”

The lease included several fields between the hall and the wood and

“three several parcells of wood and copsies.....named Francis Field Spring (which we have met before in the 1561 document), the Long Storth Spring (presumably the main swathe of Gillfield Wood) and Master Eyres Spring (perhaps Little Wood).”⁴²

⁴⁰ Matlock Records Office, Coke papers D1881/39/7 1645

⁴¹ Matlock Records Office D1881/39/1

⁴² Matlock Records Office D1881/39/6 1680

In 1683 Robert Moore actually bought the woodland from Frances Burton:

“two parcels of wood and coppice.... commonly called and knowne as the Gillfield Springe and the Newbold Spring.”⁴³

This led to the sale of 1700 already mentioned, where Moore is selling coppiced wood from Gillfield to a Dronfield smelter, Robert Greenwood.

The Gallimores of Chesterfield and the Heywoods of Brimington were part owners of the land throughout much of the eighteenth century. Their portion was a farm and Gill and Trickett Woods.⁴⁴ By 1720 John Gallimore of Chesterfield was letting a farm to Sam Pearson, except for Gillfield Spring and Trickett Spring.⁴⁵ In 1763 Gillfield Wood (otherwise known then as Racliffe Spring) was in the possession of William Ogden.⁴⁶

In about 1775 Totle Hall was sold to Alexander Barker of Edensor, who died in 1822. There is a coat of arms of the Barker family in the Hall which may date from this time or be associated with a much earlier Dore Barker. This Alexander however is likely to have been one of the sons of William Barker who was Steward to the Duke of Devonshire and who founded the Barkers' lead mining and smelting business in 1729 at Shacklow. By 1748 they were tenants of the Old Hay lead smelting Cupola in Totle.⁴⁷

In 1778, George Heywood of Brimington and Hannah, his wife, leased Totle Hall Woods and fields to Andrew Gallimore. In 1783 Land Tax documents mention Anthony Gallimore and tenants Robt Platts, Henry Watson, Jonathan Grey, John Mitchell.⁴⁸ In 1783, George Heywood of Brimington left his estate to son-in-law, Rev D'Ewes Coke. In 1791, Andrew Gallimore left his estate to niece Hannah, wife of Rev D'Ewes Coke. So it is only at this time that the estate comes together under one family.

THE WOOD IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

There were functioning water mills – though of all kinds - on the Totle Brook, the Old Hay Brook and downstream on the River Sheaf until around the 19th century. The needs of these may have something to do with the eleven pairs of stone posts recorded in the Totle Brook in Gillfield Wood which have been one of the mysteries of our archaeological surveying. These have bolts facing upstream as if they are to hold a board or some such in order to hold back water. A current theory from one of our experts, Professor Ian Rotherham, is that the brook here is:

⁴³ Matlock Records Office D1881/39/3 2 May 1683

⁴⁴ Matlock Record Office D1881 Box 3

⁴⁵ Matlock Record Office D1881/35/9

⁴⁶ Matlock Record Office D76/76/BagC/3210

⁴⁷ Sheffield Archives, Bagshaw. Vol 2. Cited by M.M. Oversby in an essay 'The Water Mills of Dore and Totle' published in 'Essays in the History of Dore'; University of Sheffield Dept of Extra Mural Studies ed. by Vanessa S. Doe 1977

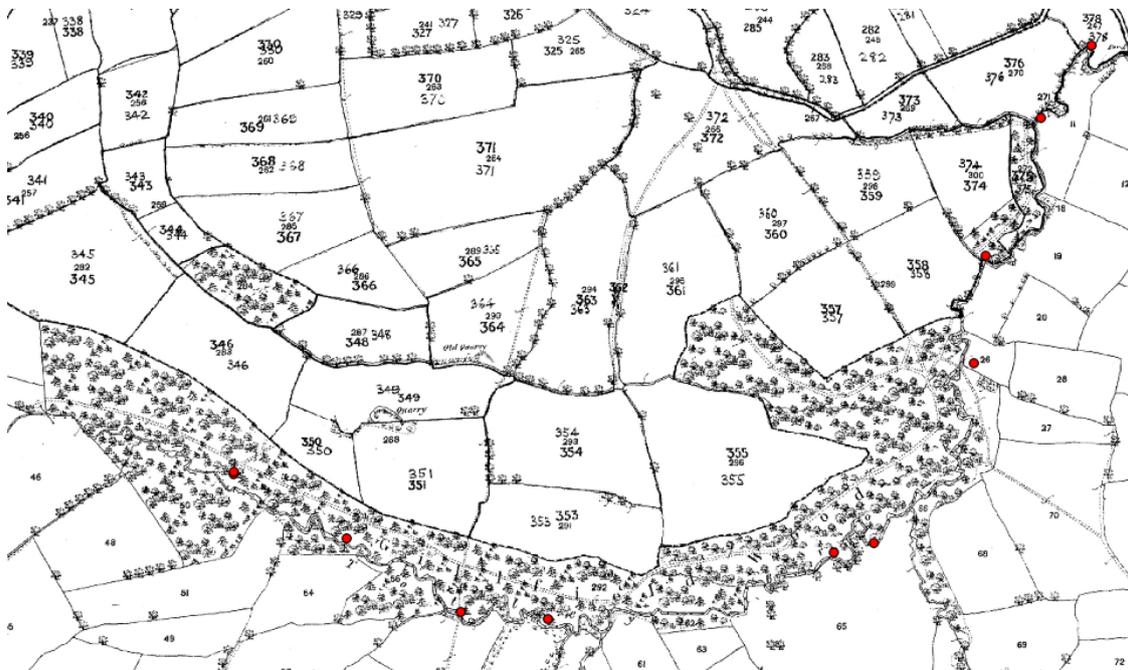
⁴⁸ Matlock Record Office D37M/H18/1-7

“...still 'young' and actively eroding (as seen from the deeply cut riverbanks), and is inherently a flashy small catchment. The properties around Topley Rise were vulnerable to flooding and we know that management of water and silt were important and expensive for mill owners. The structures are built to withstand considerable force but topographically could not be associated with a water-tight dam or a head of water. They are not industrial, recreational, or agricultural, or to do with fisheries. So we think the intention is to calm the flow.



Interestingly I have just seen pictures of a modern-day system in operation in a similar sized catchment above Pickering, and the spacing etc looks very like yours - this is to reduce flood peaks in the Pickering Brook.”⁴⁹

This theory may have added credence from Professor Mel Jones who says that ‘kids’ or bundles of brushwood tied with two bands were often used to protect river banks and the goits leading to and from water powered sites. He also talks about ‘water stakes’ or ‘radlings’ which were close spaced and driven into the bed of a river or a goit at a water powered site to protect the banks and that the kids were stacked between the water stakes and the water banks. In this way the river bank or goit bank was protected from collapse. He has documentary evidence of this happening on the



Pairs of stone posts recorded in our survey

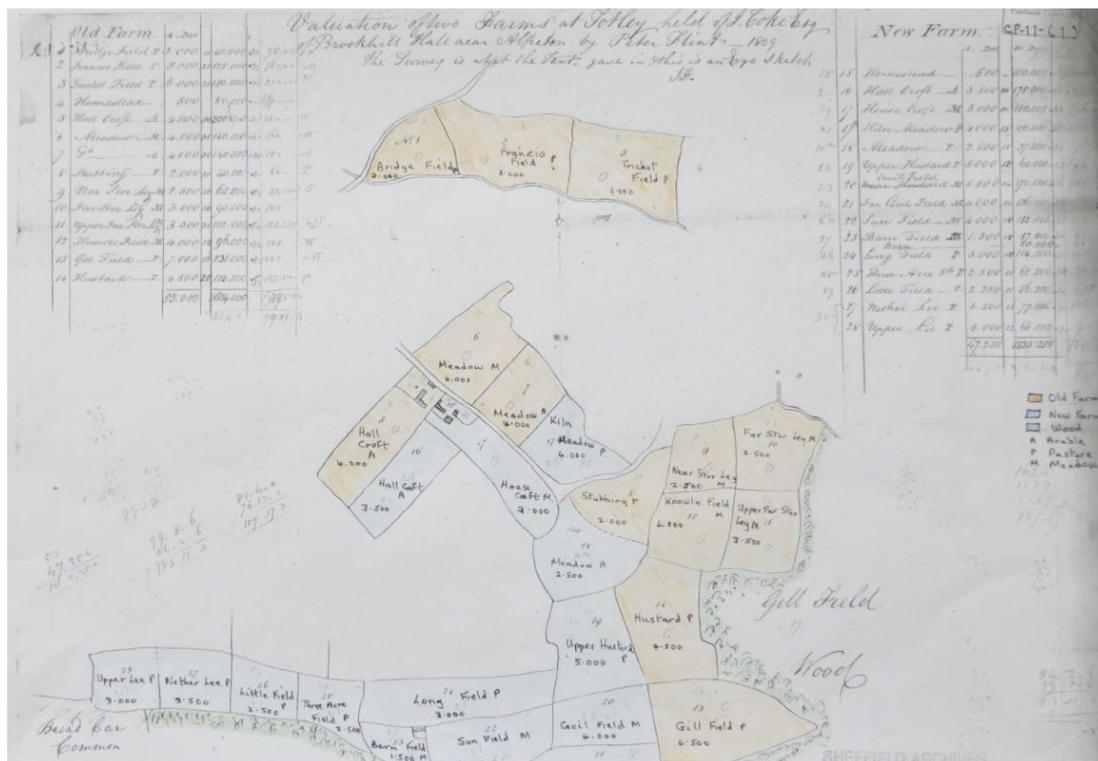
⁴⁹ Email sent to Sally Goldsmith

River Don in the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ Perhaps our stone posts are a later device but performing a similar function? Until we find documentary evidence all this is conjecture.

The estate remained with various generations of the Coke family for over a hundred years – until 1881. During that time we not only have some of the earliest maps of the Totley Hall estate, its farms and the wood but also full details of wood and timber sales – who it was sold to, what uses it was put to and even who the men were who carried out the work.

The earliest map, dated 1809, is a rough sketch showing the Totley Estate. In the early C19th the two farms were tenanted separately by the Platts family and Peter Flint, until the latter took on both farms as well as Totley Woods in 1808. Peter Flint sketched this plan for John Coke to show his Old Farm (orange) and the “New” Platts Farm (blue). Old Farm is the old Gallimore property.⁵¹

The earliest detailed plan of the wood is by the Sheffield firm of Fairbanks – a family of surveyors. This shows the acreage of the wood in a field book – later made into this larger, more accurate plan in 1813. Upper and Nether Gill Wood totalled 27 acres. William Coke, son of Rev D’Ewes Coke, was owner with Peter Flint as tenant.⁵²



Peter Flint’s sketch map of the two farms

⁵⁰ Cited in Gapping, Raddling and Snagging - ACM S 283

⁵¹ Sheffield Archives FC CP11(1)

⁵² Sheffield Archives CP 11(1) CP 11(19) FC Dro 73S

agent and valuer of Chesterfield, was employed by William S Coke, owner of Totley Hall Estate, to prepare Totley Woods for a sale. He took on the role of ‘Woodward’ measuring wood, numbering trees, and clearing soil from tree roots and entrance gates, assisted by John Wightman. Oates then showed the wood for sale to prospective buyers. His detailed account book survives.⁵⁴

It appears that Gillfield was still a coppice wood at this time. Oates employed local men to fell coppice poles and timber trees - George Hodkin, farmer and brick and tile maker at Totley Brickworks, acted as local overseer and helped to measure the wood. With men such as Thomas Wainwright, local butcher, and Clement Needham, landlord of the Grouse beerhouse at Totley Bents, they felled trees, cut coppice wood into 4 ft lengths and sorted it into cords and peeled oak bark to be sold for tanning. Other work included repairing walls and wood fences with nails provided by Samuel Turner, blacksmith; also plashing (hedge laying), making gates and notice boards, with George Hodkin “looking over the woods” to keep out trespassers in 1879.

Workers employed in wood sales

Workers	Occupation	Employment
Oates, George	Land and Timber Agent and Valuer 35 Lordsmill Street, Chesterfield.	Employed by W. S. Coke as Superintendent of the Wood
Wightman, John	Assistant Woodman to George Oates	Measuring wood, numbering trees, clearing soil from tree roots and entrance gates.
Hodkin, George	Brick and Tile Maker at Totley Brickworks	Local caretaker of Gillfield Wood, 1877. Peeling oak bark, felling trees, sorting cordwood. Hanging gates, repairing fences, hedge laying. Putting up notice boards, keeping out trespassers.
Marples, George	Assistant Woodman	Thinning plantations
Needham, Clement	Beer Retailer at The Grouse, Totley Bents, which had a “Club Room”.	Carting Oak Bark to Beauchief Station
Andrew, Thomas	Farmer	Carting Oak Bark to Beauchief Station
Wainwright, Thomas	Butcher, Totley	Repairing wood fences Nails, Oak Bark Peeling Felling, Cutting
Turner, Samuel (with Pearson and Elliott)	Smith, Totley	Nails for repairing fence in Totley Woods, New wood gates
Pearson, Samuel	Farmer	Stakes, Bindings

⁵⁴ Matlock Record Office 1881/110

Sales of rails and binding were made to local farmers such as Henry Howard, Frederick Hunt and John Stone for use in hedge laying. Mr Denton bought 40 Bunch Bean Rods; 19 tons of oak bark was sold to a tanning firm - Peter Potter Birks and Son, Woodhouse and was transported to Beauchief Station by cart. Thomas Kilner bought cordwood to be used in his Totley Chemical Works in making pyroligneous acid and its by-products naphtha and charcoal and for his experiments in glass making and his famous Kilner jars. Dore besom broom maker George Peat bought 2,300 “besom staves” – broom handles. William Topliss, Chesterfield timber merchant and main buyer of timber from Ecclesall Woods also bought poles and timber from Gillfield Wood in 1876 and 1877.

Buyers of wood and timber 1874 - 80

Buyers	Occupation	Purchases
Coates, Jos.	Tenant farmer	Stakes, Bindings,
Pinder, Samuel	Several on 1871 Census	Bindings
Green, John	Farmer and Owner of Pub at Hillfoot (Crown)	Stakes, Bindings
Stones, John	Horse trainer / breaker Farmer, 24 acres. Landowner	Bindings
Peat, George	Stoney Ridge Besom Maker	1000 Besom Staves 1300 Besom Staves, Lapwood
Pearson, Samuel	Farmer	Stakes, Bindings
Kilner, Thomas	Chemical Yard, Mickley Lane	Cordwood – 2 loads 1875, 1877
Hunt, Frederick Esq. (also Hunt & Co)	Tenant farmer, Totley Hall. Chas Alsopp was his farm bailiff Clay Sheds and Works, Deep Hollow	Stakes, Bindings
Firth, William	Farmer	Stakes, Rails
Howard, Henry	Tenant farmer 27 acres	Bindings, Rails
Poole, Mr	William Robert, Green Oak Hall Involved in Green Oak Land Society	Stakes
Denton, Mr	Norwood House, Dore	Birch Bean Rods
Bown, Thomas	Tenant farmer, Half Way House (Carriers to Bakewell, Baslow and Sheffield call here.)	Stakes, Bindings
Birks, Messrs Peter Potter and Sons	Tanners, curriers, leather merchants, 16 Old Hay Market, Sheffield	Oak Bark
Topliss, William	English and Foreign Timber Merchant and Steam Sawing Mills, 83, Saltergate, Chesterfield	Big Sale – sole buyer Trees, Poles and Puncheons (Pit Props) 1877

Besom making

At Stoney Ridge in Dore the Peats were a family of broom makers through several generations from at least the mid nineteenth century through to the 1930's. William Coke's Timber Sales at Totley in 1875, show George Peat bought 1,000 besom staves for 12/6d and 200 bindings for 6/-.



A besom maker

It appears from the list of wood and timber felled, that oak is still the predominate useful species at this time, with a fair quantity of elm too. There is some beech (presumably planted in the nineteenth century as this is not a native tree in Sheffield), larch – probably also planted - and ash.

It is likely that other crafts were supplied by the wood – clog making for instance. Gillfield has a lot of alder in the damper parts, especially by the stream, and this was the wood chosen for clogs. Hazel and oak would have been used for basket making and in centuries before, possibly to make fencing hurdles.

Vegetable tanning

The most common method of leather tanning in Britain was oak bark, the best source being from 25 -30 year old coppice.

The trees were stripped by workmen known as "barkers" with a spud or barking iron in April or May. Much of the bark was removed while the tree was still standing in an operation known as pilling. The bark was stored in thatched stacks for about 2 years until dry. It was then was shredded, ground in a bark mill, and mixed with water to produce the tanning liquor. This works very slowly to create hard wearing leather with strength and pliability. The process was very expensive, vast quantities of bark were needed. A tannery handling 100 hides would require about 25 tons of bark a year.



1876 Coke's Wood and Timber Sales in Totley records:

7th June, Clement Needham: carting oak bark to Beauchief Station £4/17/6

15th July, Thos. Andrew: carting oak bark to Beauchief Station £1/7/6.

24th August, George Hodkin: for peeling oak bark £22/7/9

19 tons 2½ cwt oak bark sold to Birks and Sons, tanners, Woodhouse £102/ 11s/0d

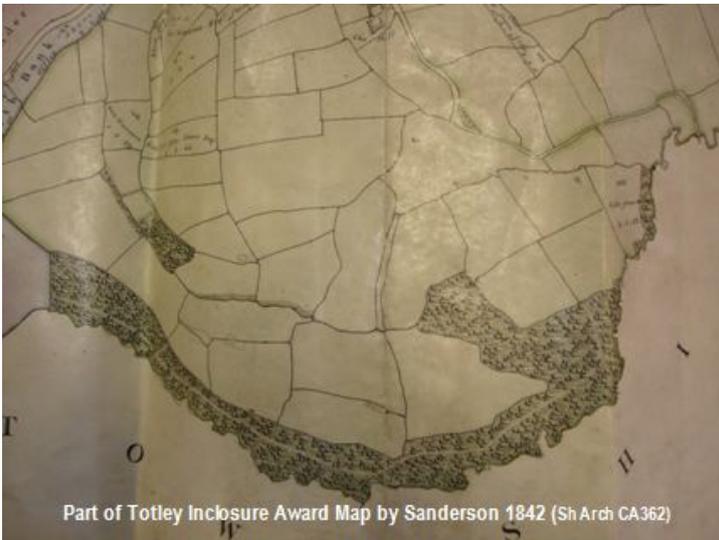
The group found the handle of a ‘froe’ possibly dating from the nineteenth century or even earlier. This was a short handled tool with a blade at right angles to the handle and used to ‘rive’ or split coppice poles along the line of the grain.⁵⁵ In the north-eastern flat peninsula of woodland (Area ?) the group also found evidence of a possible woodworking area including, possibly, a rectangular shaped sawpit.



ⁿ
Handle of a ‘froe’ found in the wood

One of the mysteries solved in our study of the wood was that of the whereabouts of an old sheepwash pool in the Totley Brook and also that of “Bull Wood” which is not named on any maps:

In the Overseer Accounts 1813 – 1837 there are a number of references to Totley Wash Pool being “repaired” or “made up”. Two mention this was a “Sheep Wash Pool.”⁵⁶ Archie Thomas, a Totley Hall stable lad at the time of the Milners, mentioned that “Our favourite Ducking Hole was the old sheep wash pool in Bull Wood.”⁵⁷ Jean Smithson describes a small wood apart from the main wood where the river widened out and flowed over an area of flat bed-rock. She said that this made a superb paddling pool and often on a hot summer day in the 1940s a crowd of paddlers and picknickers would gather.⁵⁸ Ralph Barnes of Millthorpe told us that in 1943 he worked with a team felling trees in a small wood called Bull Wood, which was below Gillfield Wood.⁵⁹ In 1842 D’Ewes Coke of Totley Hall, owner of Gillfield Wood, made an exchange of land with G. B. Greaves and so acquired a small wood called



Dunhill Dumble (No 103) and its adjacent field (No 102) in the Totley Inclosure Award.⁶⁰ Could this “Dumble” have been shortened to “Bull” as a local name?

All this evidence means that we have been able to identify not only the wash pool but also the small wood which was at the time separated from the main wood by a steep sided field. Though now re-wooded, this still has

⁵⁵ Defined in Gapping, Raddling and Snagging; Mel Jones,

⁵⁶ Sheffield Archives CA 27

⁵⁷ Totley History Group website at <http://www.totleyhistorygroup.org.uk/life-in-totley/archie-thomas/>

⁵⁸ Jean Smithson; sent to Totley History Group; published Totley Independent, June 2011, No 344

⁵⁹ From interview by Gary Scholes with Ralph Barnes.

⁶⁰ Sheffield Archives JC CA362

pairs of stone field gateposts at either end.

A visitor to one of our events brought old bottles and pots that he had dug up near the pool. Whether these were thrown away by men washing sheep or by later picnickers or just dumped is unclear. More old bottles have been found when repairing the dry stone wall at the western end of the wood, presumably left by men who built or repaired it in the past.

Until the Milner family bought the Hall in 1884, owners seem seldom to have lived there. In 1875 it was tenanted by the farmer Mr F. Hunt who let a group from the Sheffield Architectural and Archaeological Society visit the Hall.⁶¹ In the 1871 census it is occupied by an agricultural labourer and his wife, their son and another lodging farm labourer. In 1881 – the year it is sold – it is uninhabited, as is Totley Hall Farm. Many of these old Halls and Manor Houses in the district were rented out as rather dilapidated farmhouses in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century – for example Fanshawe Gate Hall, Cartledge Hall. Perhaps Totley Hall was no different until in 1884 William Aldam Milner bought Totley Hall for £2, 850 with his wife Sarah and came to live there.

THE WOOD IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

After the wood sales in the late nineteenth century, the wood largely ceased to be managed for its products. William Alder Milner was a barrister and he and his family appeared to use Gillfield Wood as a personal playground – for fishing and shooting and even swimming. At some point they created a ‘bathing pool’ in the wood - the silted up remains of which are listed in our archaeological record. People still alive today remember re-digging it out periodically and swimming there - although Jean Smithson, a local resident remembers from the 1940s:

“... it was usually full of dead branches and leaves. They had thrown out all the debris and cleared the small channel which fed the pool from the river. On that hot, summers day as we watched, the lads jumped in and out splashing merrily but the water was quite brown. Heaven knows what colour they were when they returned home.”⁶²

Jo Rundle was an ex Totley Resident who died only recently in her 90s. One of her first jobs as a girl was to work in the kitchens at the Hall and she remembers dressing snipe and woodcock for dinner.⁶³ These birds can still be found over and around the wood.

A local man – keen naturalist, historian and artist Bob Warburton - made a study of the wood in the 1970s. He says that the arm of the wood on the north-east had always been used for rearing pheasants and was still fenced off even then. He talked to several old men who remembered a small “dug out” or “shooting cabin.” Bob photographed the remains of this stone built structure and there are still remains there now - near where the Storth House footpath branches off the main path. We recorded

⁶¹ J. D Leader in Sheffield and Rotherham Independent; Account of the history of Totley Hall, Notes and Queries found in Sheffield Local Studies Library Vol 2, p.30, 27th May 1875, Ref 942.74SQ

⁶² Jean Smithson, *ibid*

⁶³ Josephine Rundle; *A Chip Off the Old Block*, 2011

this as part of our archaeological survey. Bob said that it was used for the shooting parties to have a drink or snack. However, in inspecting it, we wonder whether it took advantage of an older structure – perhaps a shelter for woodsmen in the past.

An intriguing find during the archaeological surveys was part of an early motorised scooter of an Edwardian date – an ‘Autoped.’ This dates from the time that the Milners occupied Totley Hall. Perhaps this was another plaything of the Milner family!



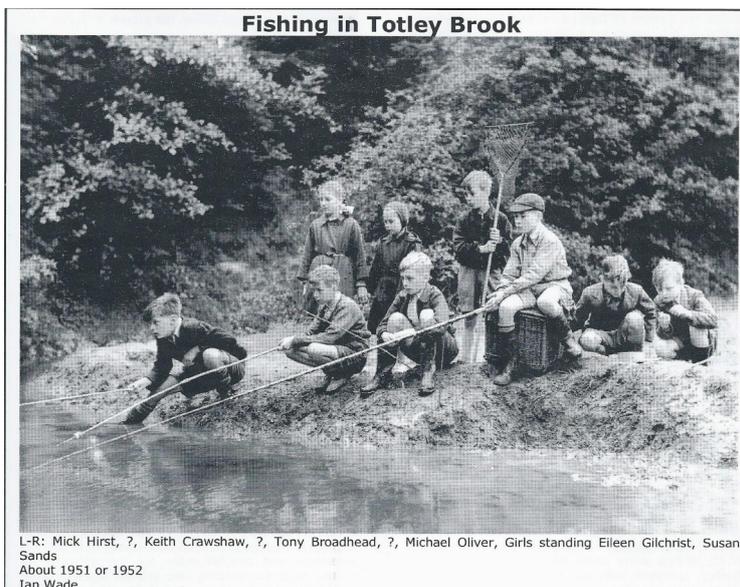
Suffragette riding an ‘Autoped’

But it was not only the Milners to whom the wood was a playground. Archie Thomas, had memories of roughly the same time:

“As schoolboys we had a glorious life. We roamed Totley Moss, Blackamoor, Fishers Moor to Strawberry Lee to Fox House. Blacka was a favourite spot for at that time there was a densely wooded area from the end of Short Lane where you entered a dark wood. Our favourite "ducking hole" was the old sheep wash in Bull Wood – that is the small wood between the bottom of Gillfield Wood and the field that backs onto the houses of Rowan Tree Dell.”⁶⁴

Jean Smithson remembered the 1940’s:

“Everyone in those days had a coal fire and needed sticks for the kindling. I remember once meeting Mrs Windle who had already gathered a sizeable bundle of sticks but as it was such a nice day she decided to walk further with us and put down her bundle of sticks behind the big rock by the path. This rock was always used as a seat and it made a good resting place for the older folk. However, on this particular



L-R: Mick Hirst, ?, Keith Crawshaw, ?, Tony Broadhead, ?, Michael Oliver, Girls standing Eileen Gilchrist, Susan Sands About 1951 or 1952 Ian Wade

day when we returned, all the sticks had been picked up by someone else and we had to go and look for more for Mrs W.”⁶⁵

Christine Hibberd, a member of the Friends of Gillfield Wood, remembers the 1950’s and 60’s:

“I was born as Christine Salt and grew up on

[g.uk/life-in-totley/archie-thomas/](http://www.gillfieldwood.org.uk/life-in-totley/archie-thomas/)

⁶⁵ Jean Smithson; *ibid*

Rowan Tree Dell. The bluebells and wood anemones in the wood were an absolute carpet but I remember finding a big patch of violets and being absolutely thrilled. My grandmother liked anything with a pansy face. We used to come and see my grandmother every weekend – so we would walk up through the wood, through the field to Storth House and up here [*Moorwoods Lane*]. I always picked whatever was in flower for my grandma.”⁶⁶

William Aldam Milner died in 1931 and the Hall was rented out until it and the Estate, including the Totley side of Gillfield Wood, was sold to Sheffield Corporation in 1945. Before it was sold, however, more money was to be made out of the wood. On the Totley side (now part of Sheffield, South Yorkshire) the wood was almost clear felled and carted away by Batty Langley, Timber Merchants of Sheffield. Jean Smithson, a Totley resident remembers:

“I’m not sure of the date when Batty Langley, the timber merchant moved in, but the wood as we knew it was never the same again. Huge tripods were erected – some kind of hoist I think for lifting heavy timber. The trees were felled and the plant life crushed by feet and vehicles. All was mud and devastation.”⁶⁷

Ralph Barnes did remember the date – the winter of 1943/44 - as he was one of the team employed by Batty Langley to fell trees in the wood. He was only fifteen years old at the time. He told us that the men worked in two teams at opposite ends of the wood, one near the old brick works and the other at the small wood at the eastern end - which he remembered as ‘Bull Wood’ - and involved felling oak, sycamore, ash and beech. Although not certain, it is possible that the wood cut may have gone into the construction of mosquito aircraft. Ralph also remembered prisoners of war from the camp at Lodge Moor near Sheffield (also known as Redmires Camp) being allowed to collect debris for firewood after the tree felling.⁶⁸ Bob Warburton says that local people also came in to cut and fell.

Dr. Ian C. Murphy also remembered this time:

“Gillifield Woods were being cut down. German POW's did the sawing and chopping. They were guarded by a few of our soldiers. There must have been a lot of trust because the soldiers' rifles were lying in the grass or on tree stumps. Once, we kids were picking blackberries. Two Germans left their work and picked loads of blackberries quickly and teamed them into our hands. Because there were leaves and stalks and bits of twig mixed in with the berries, I assumed the National



⁶⁶ Oral history interview by Friends of Gillfield Wood

⁶⁷ Jean Smithson; *ibid*

⁶⁸ From interview by Gary Scholes

view of Germans must be right. Years later I realised the decency in those chaps.”⁶⁹

Wood was carted out of the top end of the wood, Our archaeological survey recorded Gateposts at old entrance to the wood

the old exit/entrance to the wood here – substantial stone gateposts in the drystone boundary wall and a deep holloway where timber had been dragged out. GHB Ward of the Sheffield Clarion Ramblers recalled this and more gateposts on the main road:

“Gillfield Wood is approached from the Sheffield-Baslow Road by an old drive which, from the two stone gate posts, beside this main road, went straight down the long, narrow field to the wood. In 1943 the Ministry of Agriculture proposed to divert the well known path from the main road because this field was to be ploughed and re-seeded! ... Nothing was done! This field was not reseeded, but the first field – coming from the Sheffield-Baslow Road – was ploughed and reseeded in the autumn months. Gillfield Wood was then cut down in the same 1943-4 winter; the timber lorries came up and down this long narrow field, and today, instead of moderate grassland worth 20/- per acre per year, it is gorse and nettle and not worth 2/6d p.a.”⁷⁰

Sheffield City Council Estates Department replanted the wood on the Sheffield side of the brook in the 1960s – mostly with American red oak and larch. Little management was done after this and now most of the trees are rather crowded and of a similar size. Older trees still exist on the edges of the wood, the Derbyshire side of the Brook and along the brook at the end, including some beautiful large ancient oaks. There are also old trees – mostly ash and oak in the old field boundaries on either side of the wood. The wood’s ancient woodland flora still exists – wood anemones and bluebells in the Spring in particular.

THE WOOD TODAY

Nowadays the wood is quiet – only frequented by ramblers, dog walkers and naturalists. Few children play there unaccompanied. In the Spring though it is still a



Big Lad at work in the wood

mass of wood anemones, bluebells amid the musical song of visiting warblers and shrieks of nesting sparrowhawks. The Totley Brook still finds new meanders.

A group, The Friends of Gillfield Wood, was formed in 2011 to work in partnership with Sheffield City Council to conserve, improve and learn about the wood. Drainage, positioning new nest boxes, wall repair, coppicing, clearing around older trees to help them seed have been some of

⁶⁹ Totley Independent No 258, Nov 2002 and <http://www.totleyhistorygroup.org.uk/life-in-totley/drian-c-murphy/>

⁷⁰ GHB Ward; Sheffield Clarion Ramblers’ Handbook 1954/5

the many conservation tasks which are helping the old wood to go forward into new times. Holding events and surveys in the wood regularly involve experts and local people in working together. Children have been encouraged to use the wood through the local scouts, the schools and with the Friends of Gillfield Wood.

Encouraging the native flora and tree species by thinning and coppicing trees is an important part of caring for the wood too. Last year the Council employed two men and a working horse, Big Lad to pull out thinned trees, thus minimising damage to the woodland floor. Surveys by the Friends of flora and fauna and, this year, the work on the wood's archaeology and history which has been funded through an "All Our Stories" Heritage Lottery Grant, help to spread learning about the wood. Crucially they also make The Friends of Gillfield Wood more able to make informed decisions and actions about the wood's future management and protection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery's "All Our Stories" Fund for making it possible to carry out archaeological surveys and research in order to tell the Story of Gillfield Wood. We were able to do this work with the aid of expert training and support from Professor Ian Rotherham, Doctor Paul Ardron, Christine Handley, Mike McCoy, Professor Mel Jones and the South Yorkshire Biodiversity Research Group. We acknowledge the extensive work of Brian Edwards on the history of Totley – wherever we looked Brian had been there before us. We thank him and Totley History Group for allowing us to access his archive. Professor David Hey has also helped us with research on our earliest documentary sources and his many books and articles have been invaluable. We thank Gill Warburton for donating her late husband Bob's 1970s study of the wood which has also helped us in our research. We thank Dorne Coggins and the Dore Village Society for access to their archives, especially the transcripts of early wills and inventories from Dore and Totley. We thank Grace Tebbut, the community history officer at Green Estate until last year, who pointed us to particular archives and helped us to get started with our research.

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