

## ROUND WALK: TOTLEY - GILLFIELD WOOD – TOTLEY (1975)

**BACKGROUND.** Totley is an ancient parish at the south-western extremity of the city of Sheffield. The village is mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1087, and in all probability dates back much further than that date. Until quite recent times, the village was part of Derbyshire, but along with neighbouring districts became part of the city of Sheffield in 1934. The South Yorkshire-Derbyshire boundary now follows the course of Totley Brook and is marked by a sign on Baslow Road near Totley Firebrick Works.

**The walk** begins at The Olde Crosse Scythes public house (1) on Baslow Road, which is the terminus<sup>1</sup> of the 24 bus<sup>2</sup> from the city. There are toilet facilities available here.

**Cross Baslow Road.** The building on the corner was the post office from 1936 and across Totley Hall Lane was the old Fleur de Lys (2), a well, and possibly the stocks. On the 'green' was held an occasional small cattle market in the square. Later, a modern pub was built (1933) in mock Tudor style replacing this. It is now apartments in 2024.

**Walking down Totley Hall Lane** we meet the cottages<sup>3</sup> of Toft House, Rose Cottage and Toft Cottage (3); the latter was a sweet shop from 1850s. **Totley Parish Church** lies off the road to the left. This was built in 1924. Prior to that date, the villagers had to travel to Dore Church. On the same side of the road is the old village school (4), which bears the date 1827, and was provided by D'Ewes Coke, the then owner of Totley Hall. Below this is the Coachman's

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<sup>1</sup> The terminus is now at the western end of Gillfield Wood which is part of the walk later on. A bus stop still exists outside the Cross Scythes on both sides of the road.

<sup>2</sup> Today's buses are No. 97 and No. 218 (Baslow)

<sup>3</sup> A listed building dated around 1813.

cottage (1887). The several old buildings seen down this lane are some of the few remaining buildings of the old village of Totley. On the RHS was Totley Lane Farm and below this (just being converted to live in) is Totley Hall Farm.

The lane now enters a section dominated, in 1974, by Totley-Thornbridge College of Education (5), with buildings both sides of the lane, and amongst them, **Totley Hall**. This was built by George Newbold in 1623 (confirmed by the datestone over the front door). This building has been the residence of the squire for many years, the last being the late W. A. Milner. The hall and estate were purchased by Sheffield Corporation in 1944; the hall became the centre of a Teacher Training College specialising in Domestic Science. This college amalgamated with Thornbridge College in 1971 to become part of the new further education system proposed for 1976.

Follow Totley Hall Lane to the end of the metalled road surface<sup>4</sup>. Climb over the stile<sup>5</sup> and take the left-hand path

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<sup>4</sup> In the field to the right, Milner grew daffodils and narcissi.

<sup>5</sup> Old stile still present left of gate to fields. Its right-hand side has a kissing gate with Radar key access if needed, built in 2019.

alongside the first field<sup>6</sup>. This rather rough track runs to an old oak<sup>7</sup> by a shallow pond formed by seepage from springs. Cross the second field and enter **Gillfield Wood** ⑥ via another wooden stile<sup>8</sup>. Take the main path bearing right (the left-hand path leads to Holmesfield over the white bridge which crosses Totley Brook).

Immediately in the wood on the right is a fenced-off area which used to be kept for the rearing of pheasants<sup>9</sup> for the squire's sport in past years. The path crosses a small stream and then bends to the right, past a group of Silver Birch trees. Opposite this point is a small path which leads to a rectangular pond<sup>10</sup> - this was a swimming pool ⑦ excavated for the pleasure of the squire and his family. This has silted up and supports a flourishing population of Floating Sweet Grass (*Glyceria fluitans*). The pond is filled by Totley Brook, which, although shallow, supports a healthy population of Brown Trout, and a few Bullheads. Walking back to re-join the main path the stream is passed again and on the bank is a clump of Marsh Marigold (*Caltha palustris*) which can be seen in

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<sup>6</sup> Taking the right-hand path took you to the Strawberry Field just before the gate on the path.

<sup>7</sup> This Oak is found on the 1870s maps and is a listed ancient tree probably more than 600 years old.

<sup>8</sup> All old stiles are now replaced by more suitable gates to facilitate access for all.

<sup>9</sup> The area is no longer fenced off. FoGW have rebuilt some of the fence to preserve the area which we call Pheasant Wood.

<sup>10</sup> Look for a raised embankment now overgrown with various trees to your left. If you walk along the straight section of main path you have missed it.

flower in spring. Along the stream are a few Hornbeam trees, (*Carpinus betulus*) (GR ?) - this is the hardiest of our native trees and was used for cogs and gears before the introduction of modern, more easily worked materials.

Once again, on the main path, walk on past the Larch plantation on the left (the delicate female flowers can be seen only in early spring). These trees have been planted within the past ten years. In May and early June, many small holes can be seen in the main path - these are the holes of solitary bees (*Andrena sp.*) which excavate a deep hole and store food for their larvae.

The path is soon crossed by another footpath<sup>11</sup> leading to Fanshawe Gate (home of the Fanshawe family for many generations). There are a few large Beech trees on the very steep bank of the stream near this point. These are remnants of the wood before it was largely felled in 1943. ⑧ Near the Larch plantations are some bushes of Broom which are ablaze with yellow flowers in summer. The footpath<sup>12</sup> from Totley to Storth House can be taken to view a pair of worked stones – one upright, one shorter and lying in the brook. Barriers erected on these stones may have been used to restrict silt from accumulating in the Totley Rolling Mill ponds further downstream.

Returning to the main path, in the nearby field (to the north) is a small

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<sup>11</sup> The second of three north-south paths to do so.

<sup>12</sup> Most westerly north-south path.

## Bob Warburton's Round Walk in Gillfield Wood (updated: Paul Hancock)

disused quarry<sup>13</sup> which supplied most of the stone for the walls and buildings owned by the squire. In the Larch plantation to the left of the path is the remains of a small stone-built building<sup>14</sup> which was used by the squire and his shooting companions (9). Little remains, but the walls are partly intact and the large roof slabs and lintels can be seen clearly amongst the general debris.

The path undulates from this point and in one of the water-logged depressions are one or two specimens of Lesser Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), a small buttercup. The open area just beyond this point has been planted with Sycamore and Red Oak saplings, both of which are species which have been introduced to this country (Sycamore in the 1600s and Red Oak from America more recently<sup>15</sup>).

Further on, the route passes between two Larch plantations, and beyond this point is the wildest part of the wood, where the ground rises steeply to the north where a large group of Sessile Oak trees dominates the broad expanse of this part area. The path turns gently to the right and the end of the wood is in sight. Leave Gillfield Wood by the stile and follow the footpath along the edge of the conifer plantation. Look back and find the original stile and gateway halfway between the present exit and

Totley Brook<sup>16</sup>. This exit was used until 1943 when the wood was clear-felled.

Follow the footpath, cross the stepped stile in the wall, across another field and stile to emerge on Baslow Road. Cross the road to the footpath and walk right to return to Totley. (If the walk is to be extended then a further footpath exists near to the crossing point and leads to the Totley rifle butts<sup>17</sup> and the small group of houses known as Totley Bents).

(10) Walk back along Baslow Road, which was a turnpike road at the turn of the nineteenth century. Looking over the fields to the left are views of the moors, Totley Bents, Dore (Totley's traditional rival village) and the prominent air shafts of Totley Tunnel, which was constructed to connect Sheffield and Manchester via the Hope Valley. The tunnel is 6230 yards long and when built was the longest in the country. The War Memorial lies off the path on the left, and a little further on Totley All Saints School lies below the road amidst green playing fields. The school was built in 1877 and helped to absorb the children brought into the parish temporarily by the 'navvies' employed in building Totley Tunnel.

Crossing Hillfoot Road, the walker may rest on the seat on the corner of Baslow Road and Hillfoot Road. Having rested here you may retire to the Cross Scythes catch the bus back to Sheffield.

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<sup>13</sup> This, along with a few other places, gave local people access to Greenmoor Sandstone. See Chapter 4 (Geology) of Bob Warburton's diploma.

<sup>14</sup> Not so safe today December 2020

<sup>15</sup> Red Oak was extensively used as a forest tree in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and in Britain after 1920.

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<sup>16</sup> No longer visible due to the pond and trees blocking view.

<sup>17</sup> No longer in use, December 2020.