

Revealing Gillfield Wood (Guided Walk with FoGW)

This is a summary of the historical findings recorded in two surveys conducted by FoGW during 2013 and 2017.

The initial Phase 1 was a Level 1 survey mapping the entire wood, detailing trees >1m girth and features found whilst traversing the ground. An account is documented on the website and can be downloaded (Select 'Download Centre' from the menu tabs).

Phase 2 focused on features found in Phase 1. The starting points were twofold.

1. The possible extension of the Ghost Wood through a survey of hedgerows and what we called Significant Trees (diameter >300mm). Surveying the distribution of ancient wood land species that might indicate the presence of a larger wood in times past.
2. An investigation into the standing stones of Totley Brook.



An Ancient Oak

Hedgerows

There was only time to look at the hedgerows on the north side of the wood (Sheffield City Council land) but we are hopeful to be able to access some on the south side in future surveys as we have to respect that most of this land is privately owned.

>>>**Layered hedging** – a practice mainly found around the UK since the Enclosure Act in the 16th century.



The Standing Stones

We visited three of the mysterious stone sites recorded in the Totley Brook. Speculation as to their purpose has been ongoing since our first survey in 2013, but current thinking is that they were used to reduce the volume of silt reaching the mill dam at Totley Rise.

Example: Site W600

These stones, probably used in water and/or silt management, appear to be exclusive to this brook and may have been erected in the mid 19th century when the summers were particularly dry. This was necessary to ensure the dam at Totley Rolling Mill did not silt up leading to damage of the wheel mechanism. At this time a reservoir was also proposed as a means of holding water at the head of the brook, but it was never built.

Evidence of silt deposits and re-routing of the brook's flow is very noticeable in the areas around the stones.



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The 'Swimming Pool'

Said to have been constructed about 100 years ago, and certainly used by the local youth within the living memory of elderly local residents. They recount that it silted up rapidly and would need frequent digging out - more evidence that silt was always an ongoing problem for people dependant on the brook's water.



'Q' Pits

Approximately 80 'Q' pits have been identified in the wood. Used for making 'white coal' a form of dried wood to be burned when smelting lead. The correct temperature for the process was achieved when used in combination with charcoal.

Quarries and Stone use

A number of small quarries, were evident on the walk. The local rock is 'Greenmoor Stone' a high quality, hard sandstone. Much of the strata in these quarries is narrow. It would only have been suitable for (and can be seen in) local field and riverbank walls. The standing stones in the Brook would have required more substantial, thicker strata. We have not found this locally and have not been able to find other quarries in the Sheffield area and beyond, which were commissioned to provide the stones for the Brook.

Across the field north of the quarry we came upon Little Wood Brook (our name) which has another building with an unusual round cornered stone wall. The structure seems rather silted up internally, suggesting that a form of water management may have been in operation even in an unsubstantial stream like this. One speculation is that the building diverted water while the men worked the quarry; this old quarry is frequently flooded today. There are two small openings in the lower wall of the building but whether these are for letting the water out at the end of the day or just rabbit runs is all part of our speculation.

Research and Uncertainty

Much time has been devoted by our small research team to establishing a time line for the work on the hedgerows and standing stones. We would like to thank them for the many hours spent in the Sheffield and Matlock Archives and for persisting with many paper trails which frustratingly did not provide as much information as we had hoped for. You are welcome to assist us in future exploring these aspects of the wood. Details of our progress will be published on the website (www.friendsofgillfieldwood.com). We can be contacted by email at fogwsecretary@gmail.com.