

## Moor Oaks Itinerary

Road	Number	Comments
Moor Oaks	6	Built 1883 by the same builder as Dalkeith Terrace and shops nearby on Whitham Rd. Home to <b>Arnold</b> family
	23	Entire odd numbered side built by J Andrews. Home to <b>Lizzie Baxter</b>
	25	Salvation Army residence from 1917-26
Moor Oaks House	26	See separate entry. Home of <b>Marsden</b> family 1878-1910
Highnam Crescent	10	House for Methodist New Connexion Minister, 1888-1902
	20	Flockton and Gibbs house, built 1881. Home of Joseph Foulds, spectacle case manufacturer, 1882-1914
Elmore	12	Flockton and Gibbs house, built 1881
	22	Built 1884. Home of Joseph <b>Husband</b> , Civil Engineer, 1911-62
	28	Built 1881. Home of William Frederick <b>Northend</b> , Northend Printers, 1932-50
Marlborough		Largely built between 1881 to 1890 except 26-32 built 1900 to 1906
	37	Flockton and Gibbs designed 33, 35 and 37, built 1884. No 37 was 1970's home of <b>Sebastian Coe</b>
	43	Door was tarred and feathered by mistake in protest against suffragettes next door
	45	Built in 1887 as individual house. Home of <b>Adela Pankhurst</b> 1910-12

## The Moor Oaks Estate

The Moor Oaks Estate extended from what is now Parker's Lane in the west to Northumberland Rd in the east, and from Whitham Rd in the South to Crookesmoor Rd in the North.

Though it can be difficult to appreciate topography now that the area is built up, this estate is in the upper part of the Crookes Valley. If we were standing here in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and looking down the valley we would have seen the river Don at the bottom, just to the north of Sheffield. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century Sheffield had trebled in size and its local water sources had become insufficient. During the 1790's the Great Dam was constructed in the Crookes Valley and this was intended at the time to provide all the water the town would ever need. However the town continued to grow exponentially and so new reservoirs were needed. By 1820 a flight of four new reservoirs had been created by dams built progressively up the Crookes Valley, including three on what is now the Moor Oaks estate. So the water resources here represented an excellent investment and this would have been the main reason why

George Shepherd, who was one of the original shareholders of the Sheffield Waterworks Company, bought this piece of land and built a large house for himself, Moor Oaks House, at the highest point of the land in the north-west corner. (Refer to the paintings and the 1832 map)

For 50 years the fields remained here while the nearby western suburbs were developing during the 1850's and 1860's. When the Moor Oaks estate was eventually sold for development in 1878 the road layout was dictated by the positions of the reservoirs, the field boundaries and the 'Narrow Walk' footpath that ran along the reservoir embankment. Moor Oaks Rd was laid out down the centre of the field to the south of Moor Oaks House; these field boundaries are now the rear garden walls of the houses on either side of the road. Elmore Rd and Marlborough Rd infilled the triangle of land between the reservoirs, and Highnam Crescent Rd joined the triangle to Crookesmoor Rd in the north. The land was sold with covenants that restricted building to houses costing more than £400, which indicated that it was intended for 'quality' housing. As we will see as we walk around the Triangle these are indeed very fine houses with lots of interesting architectural details.

The houses in these roads were mostly built between 1881 and 1890 by a small number of well-known Sheffield builders. There are some individually-designed owner-built houses and a small number of later houses built after 1900

### **The Arnold family, 6 Moor Oaks Rd**

Bernard Stanley Arnold and his wife Liliias lived in this house between 1923 and 1948. They were an interesting couple with contrasting personalities; Bernard was very conventional and worked as a bank manager, whereas Liliias had an artistic temperament. She was an elocutionist and a teacher of dramatic arts. They had two sons, Stanley and Richard, who inherited their parents' diverse personalities. Stanley followed in his father's footsteps and eventually became Lord Mayor of Sheffield in 1972. But Richard was destined for a life in show business, starting off in music hall where he met his wife Dorothy. They formed a double act as 'Dickie and Dottie' and pursued a very colourful career in cabaret, working in famous nightspots such as Raymond's Revue Bar in the West End. Their act attracted quite a bit of notoriety as it included nude scenes and was distinctly 'risque' for its time. As the music hall and cabaret scene declined they hung up their fig leaves and went 'straight' as character actors during the 1980's. Dickie Arnold's career spanned the theatre, including the Royal Shakespeare Company, television, and even cinema. For example he appears in the 1985 film 'Santa Claus' starring Dudley Moore. He died in 1990.

### **Lizzie Baxter, 23 Moor Oaks Rd**

In 1898 this house was the home of the Baxter family and on 21 June of that year it was the scene of a tragic accident. On that day, the Baxter's daughter Lizzie was to be married at St Andrew's church and her uncle called at the house with a carriage to take her to the church. Her uncle went into the house to collect her and while he was there the driver turned the carriage and horses around so that it was facing down the hill. The bride, her uncle and her 10 year old niece then came out of the house, got

into the carriage and the driver mounted his box ready to set off. For some reason there was a further delay and so the driver got down and stood by the horses to calm them, patting the head of the one nearest to him. All of a sudden the horse on the far side bolted, and though the driver tried to hold them back the reins were jerked out of his hand and the horses ran down the steep slope with the carriage gaining pace behind. Initially the occupants of the carriage thought that the driver was on the box, but when they realised that this was not the case Miss Baxter panicked, opened the door and jumped out. She fell heavily on her back and rolled over in the road, while the horses rushed onwards eventually coming to a stop at Whitham Rd. The two other occupants of the carriage were unharmed, but Miss Baxter was unconscious when she was carried back into the house. When the doctor came she was found not to have broken any bones, but she never fully regained consciousness and died the following day.

### **Moor Oaks House,**

Moor Oaks House was built in by George Shepherd in 1822. It was a very fine, large house whose entrance gate was on Crookesmoor Rd and whose principle rooms faced east and south. Given the topography of the land this would have given the house exceptionally fine views down along the Crookes Valley. The area that was to become Broomhill was in fact over the ridge to the southwest, on the slopes of the Porter Valley rather than the Crookes Valley, so it wouldn't have been visible from here. To the west, you would have seen Pisgah House at the very head of the valley.

George Shepherd was one of Sheffield's many (>200) 18thc razor manufacturers and he was a wealthy man of 60 in 1822. The Sheffield trades directories mention that his work premises were in Solly St. We know that by 1820 he was described as a 'gentleman' so no longer actively involved in manufacturing, though he was very much involved with the Sheffield Water Company and was well known as a local benefactor, subscribing to the development of many of Sheffield's civic institutions. The 1841 census shows that George Shepherd was still living here at Moor Oaks with his wife Mary; he was 79 years old and described as being of independent means. I haven't been able to find of any children. George Shepherd lived here until his death in 1844.

The Moor Oaks Estate was then bought by George Ronksley who was a wealthy landowner with extensive farming and property interests around Bradfield and Stannington. The 1851 census also lists his sister Maria Ronksley, and her husband – a cousin – also called George Ronksley, plus their children, in residence. George Ronksley the elder remained unmarried and was living here alone in 1861, the year he died. After this the Ronksley family retained ownership of the house until 1874 but leased the house to Edwin Hunter, a scissor manufacturer.

In 1865 the Moor Oaks Estate was affected by a parliamentary bill that was enacted to deal with the aftermath of the Sheffield flood a year earlier. The bill empowered the Sheffield Waterworks Company to compulsory purchase of several tracts of land that were critical to Sheffield's water supply, to enable essential works to the reservoirs and dams. This included the estate at Moor Oaks. The dams here in the Crookes Valley had been constructed by the same engineer who built the Dale Dyke Dam

whose failure caused the flood and there was quite a lot of alarm that others may also have been poorly constructed. Once the works were finished the waterworks company retained the freehold of the estate, but leased the land between the reservoirs (what we now call the Moor Oaks Triangle) for development in 1878. (refer to maps for 1843 and 1903)

The bill of sale for the development of Moor Oaks said that the ‘.estate was to be let on lease for 800 years in suitable building plots. On direct omnibus route to Broomhill, near Broomhill cab stand and omnibus station [corner of Taptonville rd], Broomhill post and telegraph office [corner of Glossop rd]. The estate is well timbered with ornamental trees, roads 40ft wide and provided with efficient drainage.’

When the development scheme for the Moor Oaks Triangle was laid down the boundaries of the garden around Moor Oaks House were altered. The garden was extended to the south (with a new carriage entrance added from the new Moor Oaks Rd) in order to compensate for the loss of the land to the east, where Highnam Crescent Rd was built. The gardens to the east had originally extended all the way to the ‘narrow walk’ footpath. Refer to the large scale maps for 1850 and 1894.

As for Moor Oaks House itself, to my knowledge no good photos of the original house survive though there is one distant view of it taken all the way from the end of Moor Oaks Rd, and there is a good depiction of it in the painting by William Ibbitt (1858). There is however a good description in sale particulars dating from 1910, when the house was sold at auction. This reads:

“Detached residence known as Moor Oaks House with ornamental garden ground having frontage to Crookesmoor Road and Highnam Crescent Road and carriage drive from Moor Oaks Road.

House commands extensive views and contains — Capital Entrance Hall with Porch, Dining Room with two windows, Drawing Room with two windows, Large Kitchen, Scullery, Larder, Pantry. Four bedrooms, one fitted with lavatory and two fitted with wardrobes and cupboards in recess, large Bathroom, separate W.C. and Servants bedroom and separate staircase.  
In the basement — cellar.

The outbuildings consist of stabling for four horses with Chambers over, Carriage or Motor House with chamber over, Washing Shed and WC.  
Large stone pitched and flagged yard with entrance from Crookesmoor Road.  
The Grounds are nicely laid out with Grass Lawns and are planted with well grown shrubs and trees. “ (Refer to the picture accompanying the sale)

After WW2 the house was extended and turned into a hotel; it was demolished in 1970.

## **The Marsden family**

The Marsdens owned Moor Oaks House for 36 years, from 1874 to 1910, and so lived here while the Moor Oaks Triangle was developed around the house. Charles Marsden was a very successful paper manufacturer. He had been born in Hathersage to a family who were already established in the papermaking business and he led a period of expansion of the business with the development of new paper mills in Sheffield, Barnsley, Tamworth and Nottingham. Charles moved to the edge of Sheffield (Bennet Grange, Ringinglow) to manage the paper mills in the Rivelin valley, while his younger brothers James and Thomas Marsden looked after the Marsden businesses interests in Hathersage and Barnsley respectively.

When Charles and his wife Elizabeth bought Moor Oaks House in 1874 he was 66 years old and his youngest son Horatio (age 27 in 1874), who moved here with them, had taken over the running of the local Marsden business interests. Two older brothers, Charles and Lee, had both died young. Horatio married in 1877 but unfortunately his wife died just one year later at the age of 25, possibly in childbirth. Horatio was very involved in Sheffield's civic life, for example he was one of the Town Trustees and in addition to his paper business interests he was also a director of the Hadfield Foundry.

After Charles death in 1879 Horatio continued to live here alone, but by 1891 the census shows that he had been joined by Ellen Marsden, the widow of his uncle James, her son also called James Marsden age 25 and her daughter Elsie, 18. James also worked in the Charles Marsden and co. paper business and he managed the Barnsley mills after his uncle Thomas's death in 1893. In 1896 James acquired full control of the entire Charles Marsden and Co. business after Horatio became mentally ill. We know this from a published court ruling by the 'Master of Lunacy', an officer of the chancery court whose responsibility it was to settle the affairs of people suffering from mental illness and of unsound mind. Horatio died in 1899 leaving James as sole heir. In 1903 James floated the (by then very large) Charles Marsden paper business as a public limited company and he moved away from Sheffield. His mother Ellen continued to live at Moor Oaks until her death in 1910, after which James sold the house at auction.

## **The Husband family**, lived at 22 Elmore Rd 1911 – 1962

This house was the home of two of Britain's best known civil engineers, Joseph Husband and his son, Sir Charles Husband. Joseph Husband bought the house in 1911 when he was 40 years old. He had been born in Sheffield and had studied engineering in Dublin, returning to Sheffield in 1892 to inaugurate a new civil engineering department at the Sheffield Technical School. This was later to become the Civil Engineering Department of Sheffield University, where Professor Husband held the first Chair in Civil Engineering, retiring from academic life in 1936. However well before that, in 1921, he had formed his own engineering company Husband and co. He was very well known in both academic and industrial circles as an expert in bridge building and structural engineering. He left one highly visible enduring mark on

Sheffield in the form of the large steel mast on the war memorial in Barker's Pool, which his company designed, manufactured and erected. He died aged 90 in 1961.

Charles Husband was only 3 years old when his parents bought this house. He was educated at King Teds school then at Sheffield University, and in 1930 he joined his father's firm, working on housing schemes, road and railway bridges, drainage and water engineering. After WW2 Charles rose to fame in the engineering world with some spectacular projects. his best-known being the design and construction of the Jodrell Bank radio telescope. Its huge satellite dish, 250ft across, is the biggest fully-steerable satellite dish in the world and is still in use today. Following this success Charles Husband went on to work on many other projects, for example he built the post office satellite station at Goonhilly Downs on The Lizard in Cornwall. One of his projects that failed to survive to the present day was the full-size wooden replica of 'The Bridge over the River Kwai', which he made for the film of that name, and which was spectacularly blown up. He was awarded a knighthood in 1965 and became known as 'the space-age knight' before his death in 1984. .

### **The parachute tragedy, Marlborough Rd,**

On the evening of Tuesday May 20<sup>th</sup> 1902 the residents of Marlborough Rd would have been most surprised to see an air balloon descending here in the street. The basket of the balloon was empty. Earlier that evening, around five thousand people of all ages had gathered in Hillsborough Park to watch Edith Brookes, a 23 year old parachutist, make a thrilling parachute descent from this balloon as she has done just one day before a Owlerton. There was a band playing in the park and the whole event had a carnival atmosphere. The balloon had been filled with gas earlier in the evening, the young lady stepped in, and the balloon was released. It quickly ascended to a height of more than 2000 feet and when it was a mere speck in the sky Miss Brookes jumped out of the basket. Imagine the horror of the waiting crowd as they saw that her parachute failed to open and she plummeted to earth, landing with what was described in the Telegraph the next day as a 'awful thud'. Her mangled corpse was examined by a doctor who was in the park who declared her dead at the scene of the accident. The residents of Marlborough Road were fortunate in that they did not witness this horrible accident.

### **Sebastian Coe, lived at 37 Marlborough Rd, 1970s**

Sebastian Coe (Lord Coe as he is now) was born in 1956 and lived in this house while he attended secondary school in the 1970's. As a middle distance runner he won four olympic medals and set eight outdoor and three indoor world records, including three in the space of four days in 1979. After retiring from athletics he was a Conservative MP from 1992 to 1997 and became a life peer on 2000. He headed the London bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games and was Chair of LOCOG, the organisation tasked with delivering the games. Now chair of the British Olympic Association he represents Britain on the International Olympic Committee.

## **Adela Pankhurst, lived at 45 Marlborough Rd, 1910 to 1912**

Adela Pankhurst, the youngest of the famous Pankhurst sisters, lived in this house for only a short time but she certainly left her mark as she turned this house into the Sheffield HQ of the suffragette movement during a critical time in its history. She is commemorated by this plaque, which is the result of many years of campaigning by local residents for recognition of the importance of this house in local history.

The full story of what happened here on the night of Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1911 has been documented by Dr Jill Liddington, a history researcher from Leeds University, who has written many books and papers on the subject of the struggle for women's suffrage in the UK.

As you will know 1911 was a census year and for the first time census returns were supposed to be made by the 'head of each household', almost always a man, rather than by census enumerators. Also, the census included, for the first time, intrusive social questions on how long the marriage had lasted and how many children had been born in the marriage, both living and dead. This was but one of many factors that enraged campaigners for women's suffrage about the census, leading to a declaration by some that as "women do not count, neither shall they be counted". In other words, many suffrage groups resolved to either frustrate or boycott the census as an act of civil disobedience.

In the runup to the census the boycott campaign was hotly debated in the press, including in the Sheffield Telegraph, where there were many letters and articles, including of course several from Adela Pankhurst. As census night itself drew near plans were laid for how census enumerators would be evaded, census forms spoilt or even destroyed altogether. A wide range of techniques were used to frustrate the census by local groups including, according to one report, an all-night roller-skating session at the Aldwych Rink in London. Here in Sheffield, the Sheffield Telegraph dispatched a reporter to this house to find out what was going on. In his report he describes making his way under cover of darkness to the 'house of conspiracy'.

The census return that was actually produced for this house on that night is illuminating. Apparently completed by the enumerator, it names only two of the people present. These were Helen Archdale, the owner of the house and local WPSU coordinator, and Adela Pankhurst herself. Helen's three children, their nurse and two house servants are also enumerated but no names are given; the entry 'NK' or 'not known' shows that the information had been refused. Apart from the ages of the children all other questions on the form are also completed with 'NK'.

So was this after all just a small family of census resisters, quietly refusing to proffer information but otherwise causing no trouble? No. The census form shows that in addition to these established residents at this address, on that night there were also 1 male and 48 female 'visitors' present in the house, the man giving his occupation as 'newspaper proprietor' but nobody else saying anything at all about who they were. So it looks like the man from the Sheffield Telegraph got his story and enjoyed a jolly fun evening too.