

## **HILLSBOROUGH HALL & HILLSBOROUGH PARK**

### **The Steades**

Thomas Steade was the builder of Hillsborough Hall. He was the son of Nicholas Steade and Anne Micklethwaite and was born on 16 March 1728 at Ecclesfield. He married Millicent (Meliscent) Pegge, who was the daughter of Strelley Pegge of Beauchief and Mary Broughton from Lowdham, on 30 April 1768. He was a magistrate and he died in 1793.



Hillsborough House was built in 1779 as a dwelling for Thomas and his wife Meliscent who had been living in nearby Burrowlee House, which is situated just 250 metres to the east. The Steades were a family of local landowners whose history went back to the 14th century.

At the time of construction the house stood in rural countryside well outside the Sheffield boundary.

Steade named his new residence in honour of Wills Hill who at the time was known as the Earl of Hillsborough (later Lord Downside of Hillsborough, County Down), an eminent politician of the period and a patron of the Steades.

Steade acquired more land and the grounds eventually had an area of 103 acres (0.42 km<sup>2</sup>). They were much more extensive than the present Hillsborough Park, stretching north to the current junction of Leppings Lane and Penistone Road and included the site on which Hillsborough Stadium now stands. It extended further south encompassing the site now occupied by the Hillsborough arena. The grounds had areas given over to agriculture but there was also extensive parkland featuring a lake, two lodges and a tree lined avenue. There was also a walled garden, which still exists today, which provided fresh produce for the house's kitchens.

Thomas and Millicent had 7 children - all born at Eccleshall - apart from Broughton Benjamin Steade who was born at Beauchief. Broughton was Thomas's third son. He was born on 3 July 1774, was also a magistrate and he inherited the house upon his father's death in 1793 but sold it in 1801 to John Rimington Wilson of the Broomhead Hall family.

### **Rimington Wilson**

John Rimington was the eldest son of John Rimington (senior) from Royston, Barnsley. He was born on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1760 and moved to Sheffield, became an attorney-at-law and was listed in a 1787 directory at Angel Street, Sheffield.

On 19<sup>th</sup> June 1784, John Rimington had married Mary Wilson, the sister of the London merchant Henry Wilson, who had purchased Broomhead Hall in the Ewden Valley. This marriage was the origin of the name "Wilson" entering the Rimington family, and also led to Broomhead Hall passing into the ownership of the Rimington family.

In 1801 John Rimington bought Hillsborough House from Broughton Steade. The family lived here until John died on 31<sup>st</sup> January 1820. In 1838 the estate of his widow sold it to John Rodgers.

### **John Rodgers**

John Rodgers was the owner of a well known local cutlery firm – Joseph Rodgers & Sons. Rodgers was born in 1779, had originally lived in Abbeydale and after he bought the house in 1838 he renamed his residence Hillsborough Hall as he thought this better reflected the significance of the



property. Although Rodgers lived until 1859 he no longer lived there after 1852.

### **Edward Bury**

Between 1852 and 1860 the Hall was occupied by the family of Edward Bury. He was born in Salford on 22 October 1794. He was an enthusiastic model-maker as a boy and was educated in Chester.

In 1823 he formed Edward Bury and Co at Liverpool as a manufacturer of engines and by the time he was thirty was well established in the locomotive business. His Dreadnought was not ready in time for the Rainhill trials of 1829, and was rebuilt into his Liverpool.

As a competitor to the Stephensons, Edward Bury popularised the bar frame in America and, for a time, the 'haystack' firebox (D-shaped fireboxes with hemispherical casing and top) In 1831-7 he exported twenty of his engines to the USA.

Bury was a partner in a locomotive building firm (Bury, Curtis, & Kennedy), and Locomotive Superintendent of the London & Birmingham Railway (1837-47) and later of the Great Northern (1848-50). He also designed a free-running steamboat engine. He is amongst the relatively few locomotive engineers to have produced an eponymous type of locomotive and was elected as an FRS in 1844.).

In 1847 Bury appears to have been the first to design and build a shunting locomotive: an 0-4-0 saddle tank for the Shrewsbury & Chester Railway.

He succeeded Benjamin Cubitt as Locomotive Superintendent of the Great Northern Railway in 1848 and he was briefly General Manager of the GNR until he retired to Windermere in 1853. He resigned from the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1857, having retired from his professional work.

He moved to Scarborough where he died at East Villa (now the White House) in 1858 and was survived by his wife.

Edward Bury merits a separate historic plaque on the building.



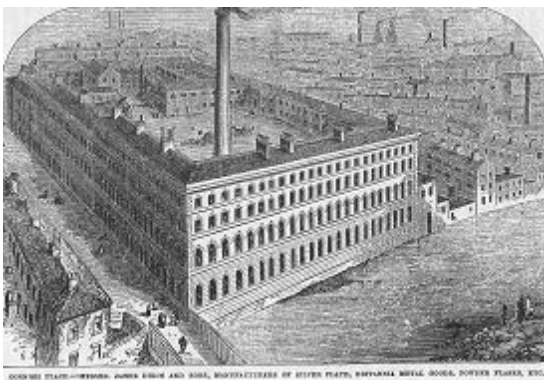
### **Ernest Benzon**

In 1860 Bury's widow sold the house to Ernest Benzon, a German born financial advisor then in 1865 Benzon sold the house to James Willis Dixon,

### **James Willis Dixon**

James Willis Dixon was the son of the founder of the well known Sheffield firm of James Dixon &

Sons, silver and metal smiths. He worked for the business which was based at the Cornish Place works.



Dixon made considerable alterations and redecorated the property. Archives record that at that time there were six servants' bedrooms with a nursery on the second floor and five family bedrooms on the first floor.

On the death of James Willis Dixon in 1876 his extensive library of over 1,000 books was sold off, his art collection which included works by Rembrandt, Rubens and Watteau were also auctioned.

### **Sheffield Corporation**

In 1890 Sheffield Corporation bought Hillsborough Park minus the Hall for £15,000 at auction from the trustees of the late Mr James Willis Dixon. The proposed park was a small part of the Hillsborough Estate which greatly exceeded the 50 acres proposed public ground and boundaries. The original parklands extended for 102 acres, bounded by Dykes Hall Road, Wadsley Lane and Penistone Road. Lands on the western side of the estate were sold to build Hillsborough Trinity Methodist Church and to accommodate new housing as the city of Sheffield expanded. The streets that these new houses were built on were named Dixon, Wynyard, Willis, Lennox and Shepperson, all names connected to the Dixon family.

The park was opened on 8 August 1892 after various improvements carried out by the Corporation to provide facilities for the public. The park was laid out in the tradition of English landscape parks, with native tree species planted in naturalistic groups in open parkland.

In 1899 a ten acre site of the property was released to build a football ground, after which the rest of the park and property was gifted to the people of Sheffield.

The park has retained many of its original features, including the Lime Avenue from the Penistone Road Lodge, the lake, the ha-ha and Walled Garden. In the early 1900's the park was used for various reasons; some areas had the grass cut and rolled and were used to present flowers, other parts of the park were rough grass for games and activities. It was the venue for the 1903 Yorkshire Agricultural Show and hosted annual local Whit Gatherings.



A stream originally ran down from Middlewood Road to the lake through an Italian garden and rockery. Near the Library there was a raised circular Bandstand used for open air concerts.



On Wednesday, May 21, 1902 The Sheffield Daily Independent (page 6) reported that:

“A shocking accident occurred yesterday evening at Mr W Brown's open-air carnival in the Wednesday Football Ground, Owlerton. In the sight of the thousands of people who attended the spectacle Miss Edith Brookes, a lady parachutist, lost her life by a terrible fall to the ground from an altitude of from 2,000 to 3,000 feet.

“From some cause, which can only be guessed at, the parachute failed to open out, and the unfortunate lady dropped like a stone. The balloon at the moment when she left it was situated over Hillsborough Park, and the body of the young lady, terribly injured, was picked up only a few inches from the railings which surround Hillsborough Hall.

In 1906 the house opened as Hillsborough library, although there were suggestions that it could be an art gallery and museum. Hillsborough's first librarian was Harry A. Valentine who received a salary of £111. In 1929 a single storey extension was added to accommodate a new junior library. In 1978 the building was found to have dry and wet rot and was closed for a period for repairs.

In 1908 the Hillsborough Park Bowls club was established in the park and has played there ever since. Since the war, the Sheffield Civics competition has been held at HPBC.

The Bandstand was finally demolished in 1950



## **Sheffield City Council**

Over recent years Hillsborough Park has been the venue for a variety of popular events including the Sheffield Show which was held annually in the park for many years in the 1970s and also for Royal Ballet performances.



The Park now hosts a regular “Owls in The Park” day, organised by Sheffield Wednesday FC. This is one of the major events in the park although from 2018 the Tramlines music festival will be coming to the park.

Each Saturday morning there is a free ParkRun that attracts several hundreds of runners doing a 5k run around the jogging circuit.

As well as the HPBC bowlers, several other community groups use the pavilion and one of the 3 bowling greens is now being used by the Sheffield Croquet Club.



In 1991/2 a dramatic transformation took place in the Walled Garden. A scheme was devised to create a garden involving the whole community; this also created a fitting memorial to those who died in the football disaster at Hillsborough Stadium in 1989. The garden was originally created and managed by the Hillsborough Community Development Trust. It is now maintained by Friends of Hillsborough Park volunteers and the City Council Parks staff.



The tennis courts have been refurbished and can be booked, by the hour, on a smart-phone app and the lake has always been available for free fishing.

Other regular events include Cycling4All each week, an annual Hillsborough Churches Network fun day and a biannual Hillsborough Park Open day in April and September which is organised by the Friends of Hillsborough Park and the users of the pavilion.