

A Short Note About a Quarry at Oakwood.

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In Oak Leaves, Part Two (2001), Murray Mitchell wrote extensively about the quarrying in the Oakwood area and mentioned how little information seems to have survived about this industry which was so important to the area in the 19th century. Recently I have come across a few references to quarries in the Roundhay Park Estate which I think are worth recording briefly here in Oak Leaves.

In the Hepper's sale details of the auction in 1871 at which John Barran acquired the Park Estate for Leeds Corporation, two quarries were listed in the lots he bought. One was not far from the Cobble Hall farm buildings, but perhaps more interestingly, the other quarry site was in the small wood at the edge of the Park at Oakwood. I wonder how many people know today there was a quarry here during the early years of Roundhay Park in public ownership?



Site of a former Quarry. The Wood on the edge of the Park next to Gledhow Lane at Oakwood.

In those days, in November of each year, aldermen and councillors were elected to a Sub Committee of Leeds Corporate Property Committee 'to have superintendence and management of the Roundhay Park Estate.' The minutes of their meetings are very informative. In September 1873 they gave permission to Mr Brayshay, who was the first tenant of the Mansion, to use 'Stone in the Quarry on the Estate' to build 'an additional structure in the Court Yard' but in July 1875 the Sub Committee declined an offer for a Mr Henry Hodgson to work the quarry at Oakwood, £5 per acre and 3s/6d (17/4 p) per superficial square yard 'for every yard of land ... for the stone beneath it.'

The following year, the Sub Committee received a letter from a Mr B. Kyne about "the dangerous state of the old Quarry at Horse Shoe Corner" (i.e. at Oakwood) so they gave instructions to have the quarry fenced off 'and a notice put up warning the public against getting over the fence or bathing in the water.' At that time, the roads through the Park Estate, Park Avenue, West Avenue and Prince's Avenue were being constructed and the Sub Committee proposed that stone from the Oakwood quarry should be used for the road foundations and 'for a bridge'.

In 1877, the Sub Committee resolved to fill in the quarry 'as soon as possible' so I was surprised to find that in 1882 they were informed that 'night soil' had been deposited in it. Even more surprisngly, ten months later in January 1883, 'the Town Clerk laid before the Committee a Notice received from the Inspector of Nuisance requiring the removal of the Night Soil Ashes and vegetable matter deposited in the Old Quarry owned by the Corporation near the Post Office at Roundhay.' Two members of the Committee were appointed to see the Inspector and authorised to take such action as they considered appropriate.

What happened at this meeting was not reported but it is clear the quarry was still a problem later that year, in October 1883, when a letter was sent to the Leeds Mercury referring to it as a 'dangerous and disused quarry ... which needs filling up, ...'

I have found nothing further about the quarry at Oakwood but the OS map of 1892 shows the quarry had been filled in by then.



The Quarry Site at Oakwood in 1871, and (below) in 1892.

