

Oakwood House and the Origins of Oakwood, North Leeds.

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The location of the boundaries of Oakwood was considered in the early days of the Society and we concluded that none have been fixed in any formal way... and for quite simple reasons.

Oakwood as a district of North Leeds is relatively new in its existence. The name is embodied in Oakwood House, the old mansion part of the BUPA old people's home in Oakwood Grove. It was part of a small estate which was given the name 'Oakwood' by one of the past owners.

By popular usage the name became used for the district of Leeds of that name the extent of which has spread over



**Oakwood House . Photograph taken in 2004
when members of the ODHS were kindly
shown round by members of the staff.**

the years to beyond the boundaries of the old estate. Today the loose boundaries of Oakwood are defined by what people will accept as plausible. Ask around and you will find that people have a different perception of the limits - especially if they want to be considered as living in Oakwood!

The early history of Oakwood House is not known precisely. Maps show us that it was built between 1825 and 1847 and it is believed to be of Georgian construction. It was probably built by Abram Rhodes, a wealthy Leeds wool merchant, in the later years of his life, during which time he also acquired an estate at Wold Newton in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Ownership of both of these passed to his son-in-law William Cadman, a tobacconist and wine merchant who lived in Leeds, near North Street.

Directories show William living in Roundhay in 1841 and that same year, an advert in the Leeds Mercury offered 'To be SOLD or LET a Capital MANSION HOUSE with 10 Acres of LAND' at Roundhay. It confirmed that William Cadman was living there and was the owner. From the details, we know this was Oakwood House although the name was to come much later.

William was inclined to live the life of a squire in Wold Newton. His earlier attempts to let Wold Newton Hall had apparently come to nothing. We know that about this time the Reverend James Armitage Rhodes, a great friend of the Nicholson family of Roundhay Park, wanted to leave his home at Horsforth Hall and was looking for a place in Roundhay (for more information about this remarkable man see my essay in Oak Leaves Part 6). Rhodes became Cadman's tenant and during his time there the house was known as 'Wood End' possibly because it bordered on one edge with Gipton Wood.

In May 1865, there appeared an advert in the Leeds

Mercury for the sale of 'OAK WOOD HOUSE, Roundhay, together with Land, Hothouses, etc. containing upwards of ten acres. The furniture was also 'available at a valuation.' Application was to be made to 'Wm. Cadman Esq. 13, Crescent, Scarborough.' Shortly afterwards the Reverend JA Rhodes and his wife left Roundhay to live out the rest of their lives at Carleton near Pontefract in a house he had inherited from his sister.

Later that year another advert in the Leeds Mercury makes it clear that major alterations and maintenance work took place at Oakwood House and from hereon the estate and house were to be known as 'Oakwood'. A Directory for 1867 shows that Henry Hudson, another woollen manufacturer, was now living at 'Oakwood'. He was the new owner and remained so until his death in May 1891.

Under the terms of his will, most of Henry's considerable estate was to be divided equally among his several sons and in June 1892, just over a year since Henry's death, an advert appeared in the Leeds Mercury. Hepper and Sons were to auction 'THE OAKWOOD ESTATE' at Roundhay.

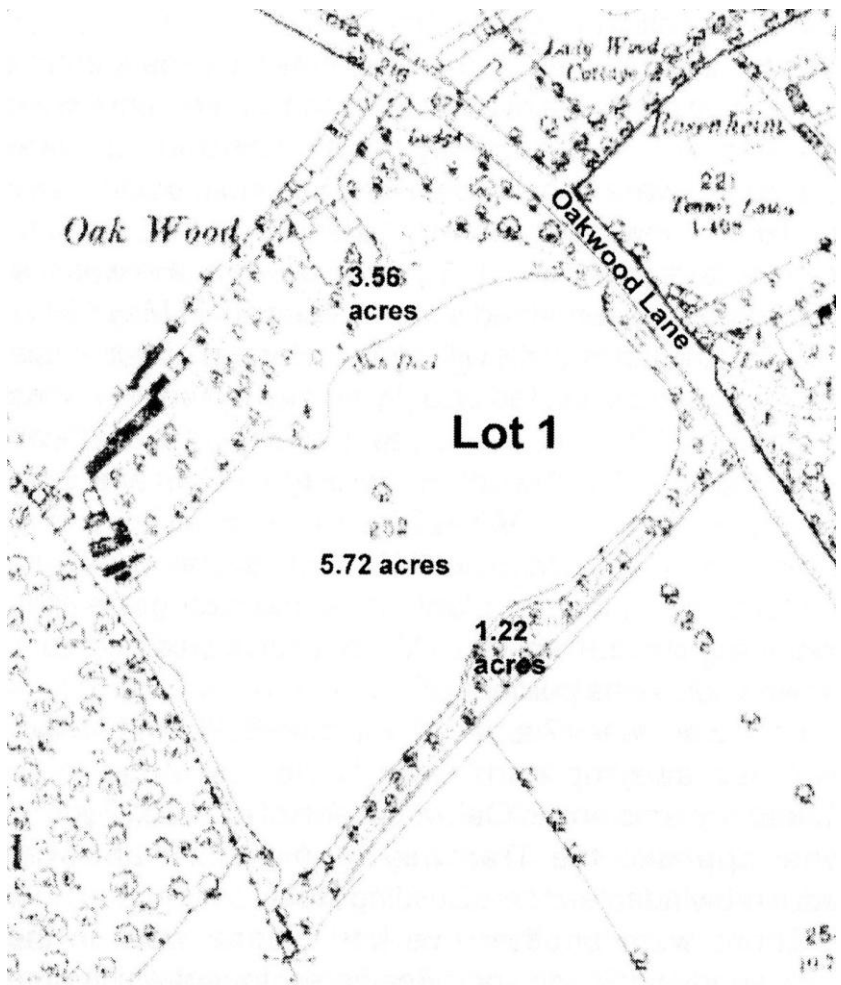
Lot 1 was 'The... MANSION known as 'Oakwood' with outbuildings, gardens, plantations and rich grass land containing about 10 acres...' Mrs Hudson would 'give early possession to the purchaser'

Lot 2 was nearly 7 acres of 'valuable BUILDING LAND with two dwelling houses ... having frontage to ... Roundhay-road and to Oakwood-lane of about 319yds.' It was 'opposite the Tramway terminus ...' and was 'admirably adapted for... building plots.'

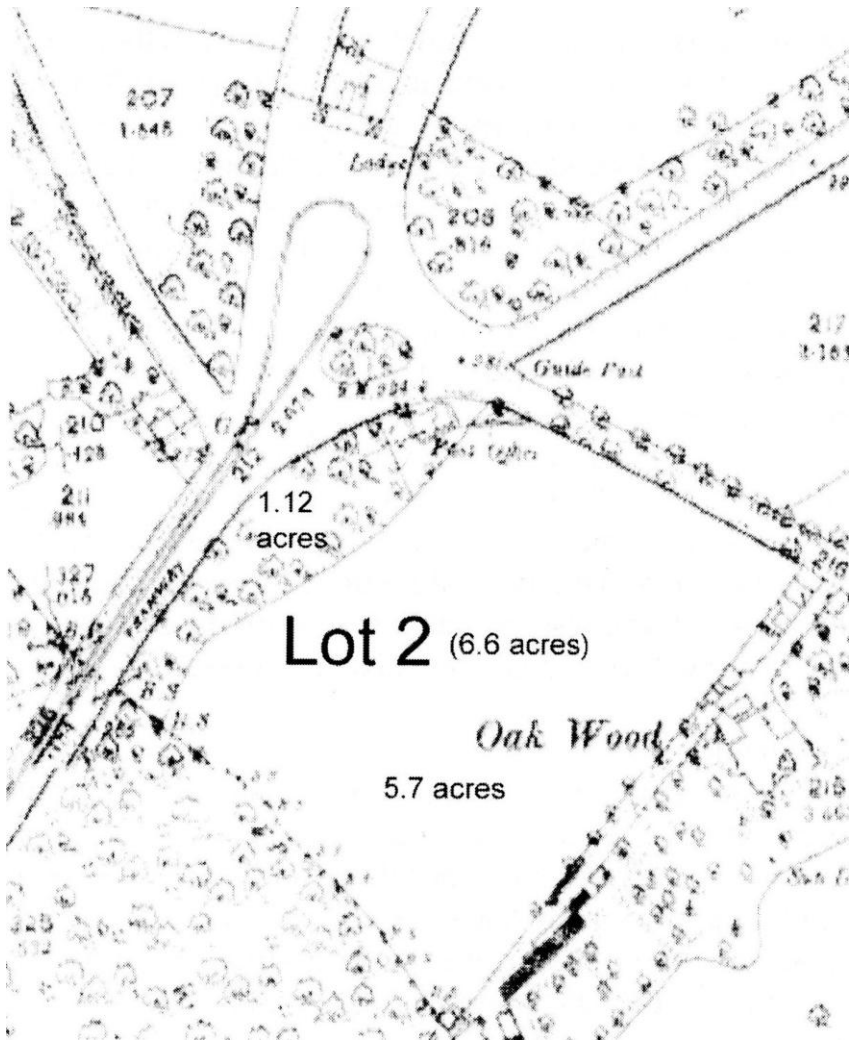
There were another five lots. These were in the Ladywood and Springwood Road area, four of which were for building land for some small houses.

Lot 2 in the auction was most important for the future of the area and for Oakwood. Its development not only

produced Oakwood Avenue and Oakwood Drive, but the parade of shops and businesses along the Roundhay Road frontage, from Oakwood Lane to Oakwood Boundary Road. The latter not only marked an edge of the Oakwood estate but also the Roundhay township and the Leeds boundary. This small area close to the edge of Roundhay Park



Map showing the position of Lot 1 in the advertisement for the auction of Oakwood Estate in 1892.



Map showing the position of Lot 2 in the advertisement for the auction of Oakwood Estate in 1892. Houses were built with frontages onto Oakwood Lane and in two new streets, Oakwood Avenue and Oakwood Drive. The frontage on Roundhay Road became the shops and businesses of Oakwood Parade. It was a very important development for the area.

would serve the growing locality of newly built homes and prosperous middle class families who lived in them. The locals would soon be talking about going down to Oakwood to do some shopping (as we do now) or of catching the tram from Oakwood to Leeds (as we do now, but by bus).

Today, Oakwood is well-established as a district in North Leeds. Happily, the old Oakwood House mansion from which the name comes, remains with us, tucked away not far from Mr Preston's historic Oakwood Parade and the iconic (but sadly decaying) Oakwood Clock. We are lucky that Oakwood House still exists having survived the passing of time which has stolen away such buildings as North Hill (the home of Stephen Nicholson), Oakwood Grange (where the first moving pictures from a single lens camera were taken) and the beautiful Park Lodge building of the 1870s which was also an impressive landmark of Oakwood in the early days of this infant district of Leeds.

References

Mainly newspapers, OS maps (for which Crown copyright is reserved), census records and Leeds area directories. For more information about the Cadman and Rhodes families see <http://www.oakwoodchurch.info/oakwoodhouse.html> 'Cadmans at Roundhay St John the Evangelist Roundhay Leeds' by Celia Moss.