

## The History of Gledhow Hill House and Estate, the Home of Roundhay School

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Gledhow Hill is the name of the nineteenth century mansion and estate which is now part of Roundhay School and its playing fields situated between Gledhow Lane to the south and Old Park Road to the east. A great many Roundhay families have been educated at the Roundhay Schools and the present account attempts to trace the history of the house and its grounds since it was established in 1842. Since then the house has had four names and six owners - only four of whom actually lived there.

In 1840 John Dixon, a descendant of Jeremiah Dixon of Gledhow Hall, sold 19 acres of land in Gledhow to Joseph Thompson, a victualler. Two years later John Shephard bought the land from Thompson for £3,478. The sale was agreed in March 1842, with conveyance of the property in 1848. The land purchased was Closes (fields) Nos. 249,

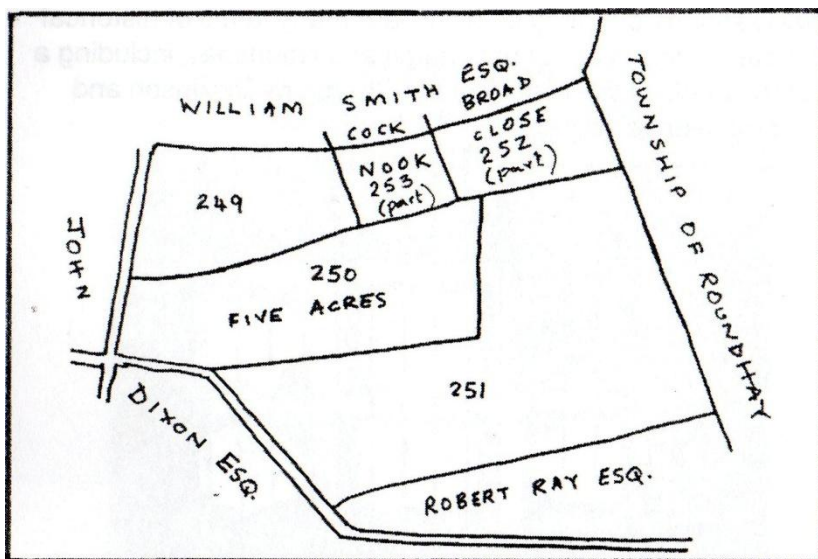
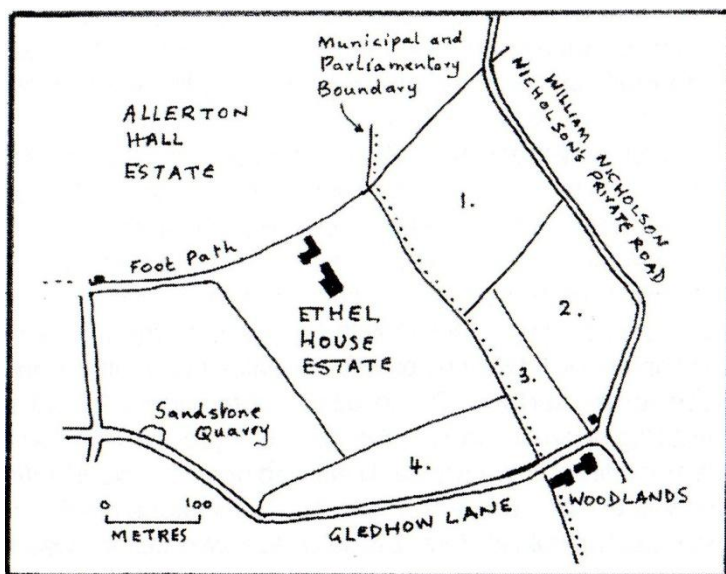


Figure 1. 1842 Sale Plan with the field numbers of the area bought by John Shephard from Joseph Thompson.

250, 251 and parts of 252 and 253 (See Figure 1). John Shephard then built the original Mansion which was named Ethel House. His mortgage was not paid off until 1848.

The House was built of the local sandstone (Gipton Wood Stone: see Mitchell 2001). The stone was worked from a quarry opened on the west side of Close No. 250 (Five Acres), see also Figure 2.

In 1859, Shephard sold the estate and mansion to James Whitham, ironmaster and engineer of Headingley, for £7,000. Whitham marked the purchase by having the Carriage House clock installed - it was dated 1859. By 1861, Whitham remortgaged the property having greatly enlarged and improved the Mansion House, and built Offices thereto, also Carriage House, Stables, Horse Boxes, Cow Mistals, Sheds,



**Figure 2. Six inches to one mile Ordnance Survey map of Ethel House Estate. Surveyed in 1847, Published in 1851. Field numbers 1 and 2 (Rale Closes) and 3 (Long Close) were bought by James Whitham from William Nicholson Nicholson in 1863. Field number 4 was bought by Charles Ryder in 1890.**

Blacksmith's Shop, Engine House with Steam Engine therein, Green Houses, Conservatory, Entrance Lodge and other buildings ... thereby extensively increasing the value of the estate. Whitham's original staircase was lit through a stained glass dome which no longer exists.

In 1863, Whitham extended the estate by buying 14 acres of adjacent land to the east from William Nicholson Nicholson of Roundhay Park for £4,700. He also acquired access over William Nicholson Nicholson's private road - now Old Park Road, and paid £2 10s per annum for repairs to this road. The details of this extension are shown on Figure 2. It lies to the east of the old Roundhay Park boundary which is now marked in part through this area by a stone wall with ridge-shaped capstones. Comparison between existing fragments of this old stone boundary wall with its tool-marked cap-stones, and the present wall forming the Old Park Road and Roundhay School boundary suggests that the stone wall originally crossed what is now the school field. When Whitham bought this eastern extension to his estate, the wall was probably carefully taken down and rebuilt along the side of Old Park Road.

In July 1876, the Ethel House Estate of 34 acres, the residence and property of Jas. Whitham Esq., was advertised to be sold by auction by Messrs Hepper and Sons. Hepper's sale particulars noted that the House was very substantially built of dressed stone, to a large extent quarried on the Estate, was in excellent order throughout, had a fine portico with Ionic columns embellishing its western front, and that the celebrated Gipton Wood Stone not only underlies the whole of the estate but is close to the surface. Some acres of this stone could be got without entering upon or marring the pleasure grounds, and as it was in great demand, it could be profitably worked now, and would ultimately be of great value. The house itself is built of sandstone blocks and the basement, including cold larders, 2 wine and 2 beers cellars, was hewed out of this stone. Outside there was a deep ice well sunk into the solid rock.

The estate was not sold however until 1884 when Richard Clere Parsons, an engineer, bought the property for £14,000 and renamed it Birr House. The gardens at this time contained three costly stone and iron fountains, and an octagonal arbour with stained glass in the English Garden. There was also a new farmer man's cottage .For more

Information about this Parsons' family and their connections with Leeds and Roundhay, see page 26 in this issue of Oak Leaves .

In 1887, the estate was sold to Charles Ryder, brewer (a director of Tetley's) for £15,250 and the estate and house were renamed first Ryder House and later Gledhow Hill. The Mansion was further enlarged in 1888 with a billiard room and dining room extension on the east side. 1888 plans show vineries and landscaped grounds, and the original lodge on the S.W. boundary plus a later one on the N.W.

In 1890, Charles Ryder bought another 4 acres between the southern boundary of the estate and Gledhow Lane for £560, to prevent speculative building (field close marked 'Robert Ray Esq.' on Figure 1, and No. 4 on Figure 2).

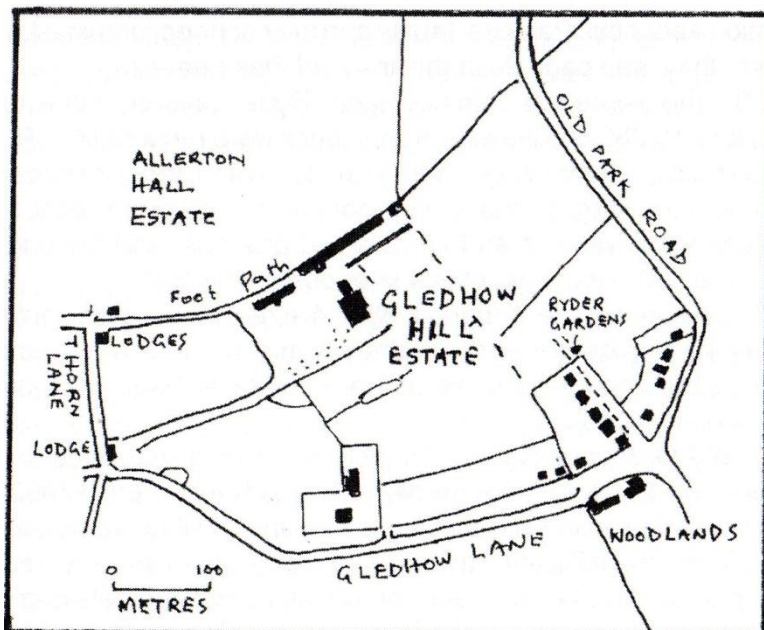
The 1893 Ordnance Survey 25 inch to the mile map records the layout of the extensive formal garden. Charles Ryder died in 1902 but his daughters Emily and Louisa lived at Gledhow Hill for some years.

The Gledhow Hill Estate was again in the hands of Messrs Hepper and Sons in July 1911, the sale particulars noting full details of the estate at the end of its short but varied life in private hands, including a detailed map of this valuable freehold Residential Estate.

In 1915, the estate was acquired by Herbert Wright Thompson (speculator) who intended to develop the land for house building. Thompson had other business interests in land for house building, including the area we now know as Golden Acre Park, but very few houses were built. He was also proprietor of the Harehills Picture House on Roundhay Road (Shelton 2001, pp. 106-107, 114).

Thompson never lived at Gledhow Hill and like the owners of other mansions, he lent the property to be used as an auxiliary military hospital throughout WW1. About 1000 soldiers were treated there (Scott 1923, p. 230). He died in 1928 and is buried in St John's Churchyard at Roundhay under a beautifully designed marble miniature domed temple.

Also in 1915, the Leeds City Council bought a narrow strip of land on the south side of the Estate to widen Gledhow Lane, and demolished a house at the junction of Gledhow Lane and Old Park Road which was perhaps for estate workers. A new road was constructed on the north side of the line of trees and now forms one of the dual carriageways of Gledhow Lane. The trees were originally at the southern boundary of Charles Ryder's Estate.



**Figure 3. Six inches to one mile Ordnance Survey map of Gledhow Hill Estate. Surveyed in 1847. Revised in 1915-1920.**

The narrower carriageway to the south of the trees is the original Gledhow Lane which was the main route from Red Hall and N.E. Leeds across Roundhay Park to Chapel Allerton and Central Leeds, before the Roundhay Road Turnpike was built from Sheepscar to Church Bar near St John's Church in the early nineteenth century. There was probably no road along the Roundhay Road valley before the Turnpike was constructed.

Between 1915 and 1919 (see Nixon, 1957, p. 1), houses had been built on the north side of Gledhow Lane, Old Park Road and Ryder Gardens (see Figure 3). But this development stopped in 1919 when Leeds City Council purchased the rest of Gledhow Hill Estate for £17,000 and planned to build two new secondary schools. Roundhay School for boys was opened in 1926, and Roundhay High School for girls opened in 1932.

They were constructed in the Georgian style with red brick and sandstone dressing and the development became famous as 'the loveliest day school in England' (Nixon 1957, p. 2). The facilities and teaching provided were greatly to the benefit of many generations of Roundhay residents. The walled kitchen garden was one of the assets.

Nixon (1957, p. 1) recorded the following interesting information about the years before parts of the Gledhow Hill Estate were bought by the Leeds City Council. In 1903, two ladies who had been governesses in Leeds families, opened a school in North Park Avenue, with four pupils. Little did they think that from this small beginning Roundhay Schools would spring. In 1919, the Leeds Education Authority purchased this small school. The pupils were eventually housed in the grey house on the Ryder's family estate (Gledhow Hill House - known as 'The Mansion' in Roundhay School days) which the City Council had had the foresight to obtain for projected schools.

Sadly the two schools came to the end of their lives by the end of the twentieth century, and between 2001 and 2005 the site underwent a major redevelopment. The girls' school was demolished, but the east and south faces of the boys' old school were retained and a new building was built behind the original facades. Gledhow Hill Mansion was restored for school use and the roof was renewed. No use could be found for the estate carriage and stable blocks, out-buildings and the clock tower which backed onto the footpath on the north side of the estate. They were all completely demolished.

The main lodge-house on the corner of Thorn Lane and Gledhow Lane is now neglected and under threat of demolition. It is often referred to as Lobb Cottage, having been apparently occupied by William Lobb, the estate gardener. Mr Lobb was subsequently famous as having introduced the delphinium to this country, following travels abroad in the early 1840's searching for new plants. In the 1876 sale particulars, the Lodge is described as one storey high and of a very superior character containing a sitting room, a kitchen and three bedrooms and a porch. It is built of the same sandstone as the Ethel Hill Mansion and has richly carved dressings. The blocks of the walls facing the gateway have distinctive tool marks known as Harehills Tooling (See photographs in Mitchell, 2001). How disappointing that no use can be found for this fine building of historic interest.

## REFERENCES

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**Beautifully carved bannister post head in Ethel House Mansion. Decorated with oak leaves!**