

Owners of Gipton Wood - Gift to Leeds

By Peter J. Kelley

On 16 November 1923, The Common Seal of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Citizens of Leeds, was fixed to a Deed of Gift conveying “All that parcel of land forming part of Gipton Wood situated on the east side of Roundhay Road ... together with all the timber and trees growing and standing thereon ...” to the Corporation of Leeds.

It was intended that the area should be used and maintained as an open space, for the benefit of the public and should as far as possible be preserved as woodland.

This was to be part of a much more ambitious project known as ‘The Leeds (Roundhay, Seacroft and Cross Gates) Town Planning Scheme No.3’.

The four donors making this gift had each inherited part of the land from the estate of James Brown (2) who died in 1845.

James Brown (1) 1758 – 1813 was a merchant and manufacturer with premises in Woodhouse Lane Leeds. On 17 October 1785 he married Ann Williams and had three children, two sons, James and William Williams and one daughter Mary. Mary was born on 12 August 1790 but lived for only ten months.

Their youngest son became known as, William Williams Brown JP (1788 – 1856) of Allerton Hall. A prominent banker in both Leeds and London, he was elected to the Corporation of Leeds in 1835. In 1812 he married Margaret Brockden, the only child of Isaac Duncan Brockden of Philadelphia. They had one son and two daughters. Their son Samuel James Brown left Leeds when, in 1841, he married Jacobina Maria Sophia, the eldest daughter of Sir Joseph Radcliffe, Baronet of Ruddington Park, Nottinghamshire. Their eldest daughter Ann Williams Brown married Thomas Benyon of Gledhow Hall, the owner of the prosperous Meadow Lane Flax Mills.

The oldest son James Brown (2) (1786 – 1845) DL and JP of Harehills Grove, joined his father as a merchant manufacturer at 15 Woodhouse Lane and Bagby Mills. Both father and son made a considerable fortune in the post-American War boom in the cloth trade. During the 1830's they purchased over 770 acres of land in the Potternewton area, which included land in Harehills and Gipton. James Brown (2) married in 1811 the daughter of Matthew Rhodes, a prominent Leeds merchant in the export trade to both America and Europe. They had one son and three daughters.

Their son, James Brown (3) (1814 – 1877) inherited a large fortune and bought the Copgrove Hall estate near Boroughbridge and Rossington Hall near Doncaster. He gave up manufacturing in 1857 when he became MP for Malton. He was also appointed High Sheriff of Yorkshire, DL and JP. When on 19 April 1877 he died a bachelor, his estates passed to the families of his three sisters, who had already benefited from their fathers generous marriage settlements and bequests.

The inheritors were widely dispersed in different parts of the country and employed a local land agent to sell off the land for building plots. By 1923 Gipton Wood had not been sold and the descendants of each sister still owned one third of the property.

The elder sister Charlotte Anne Brown, born 22 January 1813, married in 1833 Richard Shuttleworth Streatfield DL and JP of the Rocks, Uckfield, Sussex. They had two daughters and one son. Their son, **Richard James Streatfield** born on 26 February 1844, inherited both The Rocks and Rossington Hall, also becoming the owner of **one third** of Gipton Wood.

The second sister Mary Brown, born 18 May 1815, married in 1841 Thomas Shiffner of Westgate House, Sussex. They had two daughters: Emily Charlotte, born 26 May 1842; and Anne Mary, born 7 July 1845. Emily Charlotte married in 1889 **Admiral Sir Francis Charles Bridgeman Bridgeman GCB**, who inherited the Copgrove

Hall estate and also became the owner of **one sixth** of Gipton Wood. Anne Mary married in 1876 Sir Reginald Henry Graham 8th Bart of Norton Conyers, Melmerby, North Yorks. Their son **Sir Reginald Guy Graham DSO 9th Bart** of Norton Conyers also owned amongst his estates, **one sixth** of Gipton Wood.

James Brown's third and youngest sister was Anne Rhodes Williams Brown born 5 March 1819 she married in 1839, James William Scarlett of Achamore House, Gigha, Argyllshire, and Downland, Sussex. The eldest son was William James born 16 October 1839, married Henrietta Low of Kilmallock, Co. Limerick. Their eldest son **William James Yorke Scarlett** of Fyfields, Andover, Hampshire MFH, numbered amongst his possessions **one third** of Gipton Wood.

On 16 November 1923 each of these four landowners put their individual pieces of Gipton Wood together and donated it to the Corporation of Leeds. Gipton Wood is now owned by Leeds City Council and managed by the Parks and Countryside Department who, in conjunction with the Friends of Gipton Wood, maintain it as an open space for the benefit of the public.

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