



Glen Howe & New Hall Woods



GLEN HOWE PARK

Glen Howe Park is located just to the west of Wharncliffe Side, which lies 10 kilometres north-west of the centre of Sheffield, between Oughtibridge and Stocksbridge. The park is some 19 acres in extent and has long been renowned as an exceptionally attractive location. Occupying the steep-sided valley of the Tinker Brook, this is an absolutely delightful spot; quiet shady woodland, gently tumbling streams, some outstanding trees and shrubs and stunning views across the Don Valley to Wharncliffe Woods. The park is nothing like as well known today as it was formerly and it has an intriguing air of a faded former glory. There are also some excellent stone sculptures and other features to discover.



The Park was given to the people of Wharncliffe Side in 1917 by local paper manufacturer Joseph Dixon and his friend John Mills, who had previously purchased the area for £1000, for use as a pleasure garden. Before this the area was previously known as Haw, How, Hall or Howe Wood. It was in 1974 that ownership of the park passed to Sheffield City Council as a result of local government reorganisation.

THE BENEFACTORS

Joseph Dixon was the son of Peter Dixon who bought the Spring Grove paper mill in Oughtibridge for £8500 in 1871. At the age of 22, Joseph became the manager and under his direction business flourished and the mill became a major contributor to the local economy.



The Dixons had a reputation as good employers and wages and working conditions were better than most. In 1875 Joseph bought seven houses, a shop and three acres of land to provide housing for some of the workers.

In 1887 with others he financed the building of Wharncliffe Side School and paid for half the cost of providing the services of a district nurse for the locality.

Little is known about the background of John Mills who took up residence in the lodge. A stonemason by trade, he is said to have quarried stone from the pits in the park and used it to make troughs and gateposts for customers. Much of the landscaping of the park, the cascades and ponds, are his doing. Interestingly enough this tradition of stone working at Glen Howe has continued until recently for a resident of the Tower called Vicky



John Mills beside the pond in the park

was a sculptor and made the pine cones, bird and sheep sculptures which add so much interest to a visit to the park today.

THE PACKHORSE BRIDGE

In the park, spanning the little brook, stands a particularly outstanding stone pack horse bridge. This was not, however, its original location. The elegant structure was built in the nearby Ewden Valley in 1734 before being moved from here in 1925-26 when More Hall Reservoir was constructed. It stood near the corn mill, from which it derived the name of 'The New Mill Bridge'.

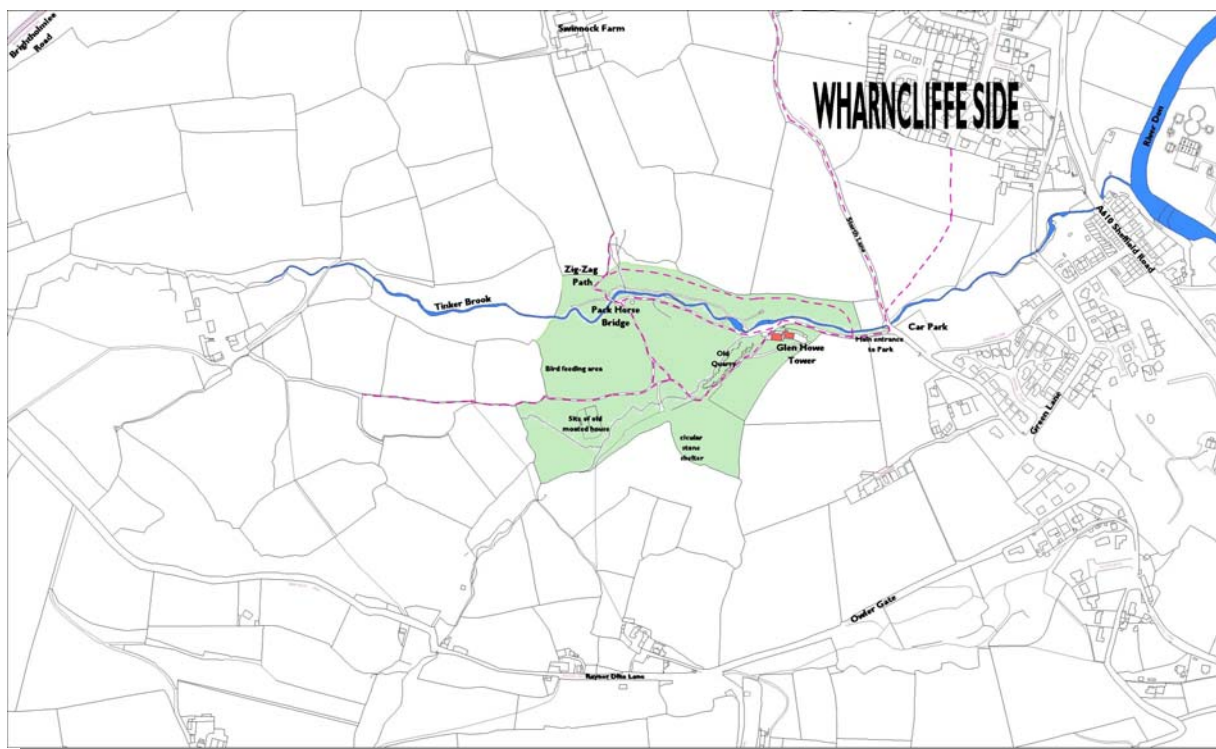


Again it was the local benefactor Joseph Dixon who stepped in to cover the costs of dismantling and rebuilding the bridge in the park, even though there were those who were of the opinion that it should be positioned in a more central Sheffield Park.

Sadly, Joseph Dixon did not live to see the completion of the project as he died in 1926 aged 77. He is buried in Bradfield churchyard, where in 1930 a stained glass window was dedicated to his memory.



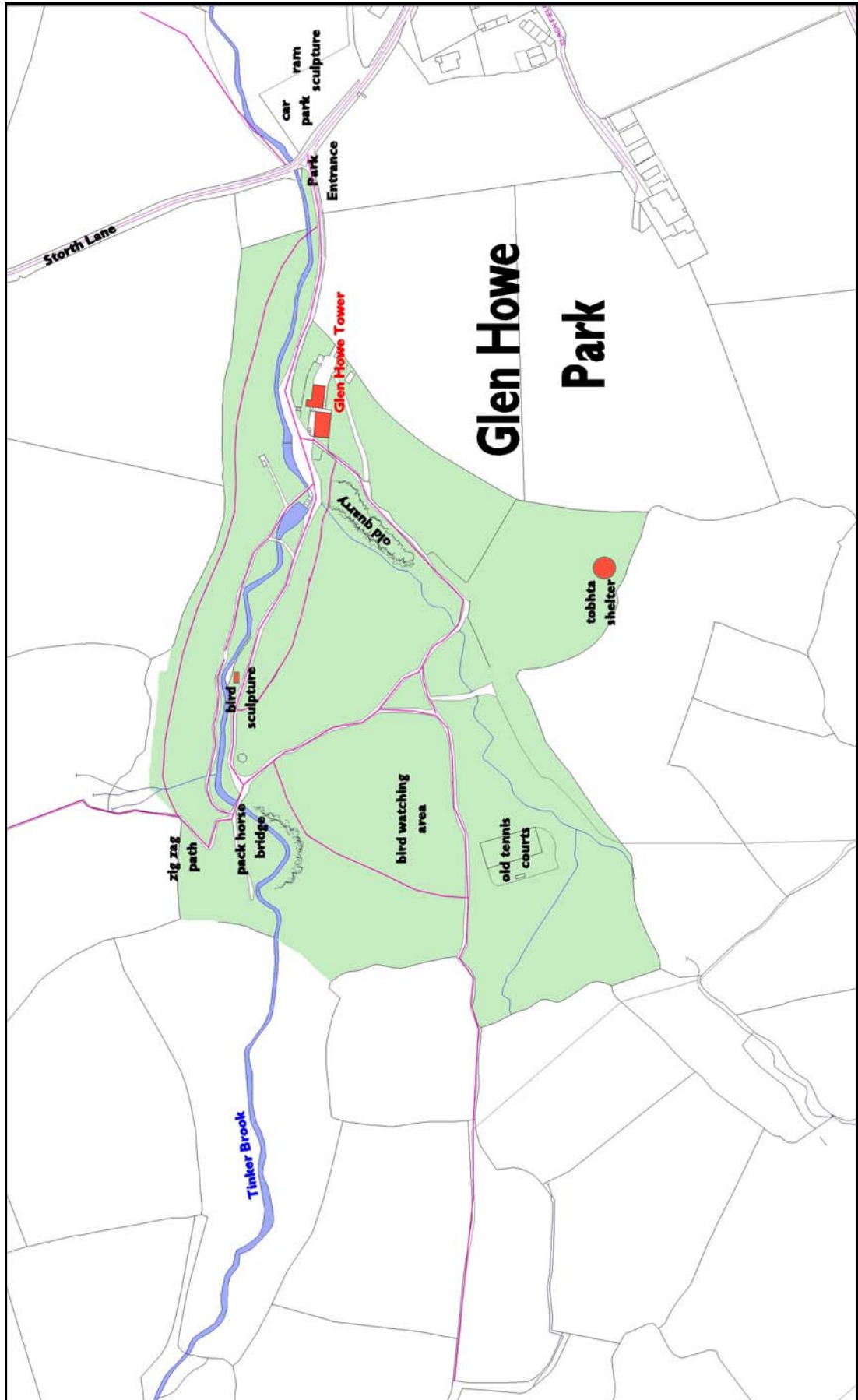
There are also 18th century references to the remains of a moated medieval hall in an area now covered by a derelict tennis court. This site has been thoroughly investigated during a recent archaeological survey performed as part of the *Fuelling a Revolution* programme.



Map to Show Location and extent of Glen Howe Park, Wharnccliffe Side.



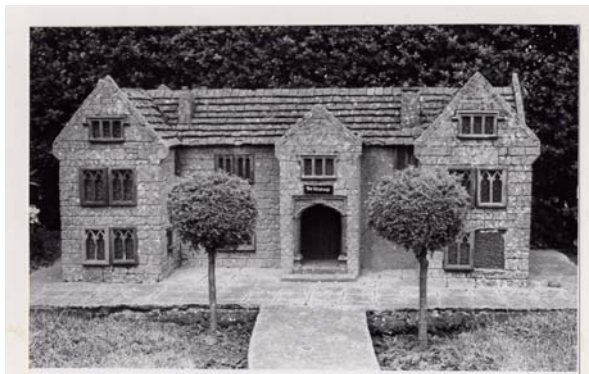
Aerial View of same area as map above.



GLEN HOWE TOWER

Situated in the western part of the site, near to its main entrance, is the park's lodge, a curious stone building known as Glen Howe Tower, built in 1881 by John Mills who lived there until the park was gifted to Wortley District Council in 1917.

It seems probable that the stone used to construct the building came from the quarry only a few yards away in the park.



Adjoining the Tower, in the early 20th century, was a wooden pavilion from which John Mills would serve teas and refreshments to park visitors.

Apparently this was not the only visitor attraction in Glen Howe, for there are surviving photographs of an extraordinary **model village**, (opposite) complete with funfair! This seems to have been located somewhere near the Tower but it is presently unknown who built it or what became of it.



A DAY IN THE COUNTRY

Sir Arthur Cyril Pearson was a wealthy London newspaper publisher who used his newspaper, 'Pearson's Weekly' to raise public donations for charitable purposes. One of these was 'Pearson's Fresh Air Fund' which was set up in 1892 to provide impoverished children from London's East End with a day in the country.

Having succeeded in raising large sums of money he proceeded to invite responsible organisations from other towns and cities to apply for funds to cover the cost of similar excursions. In 1893 a group of Sheffield teachers therefore met to form a 'Fresh Air Group'.

One of the most favoured destinations for such trips was Glen Howe Park. Groups of poor children would be escorted from Oughtibridge station to Glen Howe and arrive at the tea pavilion. Here they would form a queue to collect their picnic tea before going to the top field to play games or take turns on the swing boats.

Similar trips to the park were run by the Ragged School Union, and the policemen of Burgoyne Road Police Station occasionally brought groups of children in wagonettes for a much needed day out in the fresh air.

(For more information see-

***'For the Love of Children, a Story of the Poor Children of Sheffield'* by Marjorie Dunn)**



The girls arrive first and are served with their refreshments at the tea room at the Tower.



It is now the boy's turn to collect their drink and bun.



As many as 350 children at a time came to Oughtibridge on the train from Neepsend Station in Sheffield. They then walked in file to Glen Howe, the girls separately from the boys. In this picture they seem to be sitting on the stone terraces watching sports

All the girls join in a circle game. In hot weather their elaborate outfits must have been unbearable.



The party make their way home at the end of the day, through the valley, across to Brightholmlee and down to Bitholmes House.



BUFFALO BILL AT GLEN HOWE; FACT OR FICTION?

There has long been a local tradition that Buffalo Bill, or William Cody to give him his real name, put on a performance in Glen Howe Park in the early years of the 20th century. He is supposed to have displayed his marksmanship by shooting his name into the bark of a large beech tree (a practice which would be much frowned on today!) There are certainly newspaper accounts of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show visiting Sheffield on two occasions around this time but unfortunately no references to his having been to Glen Howe, and the tree, alas, no longer stands.

THE WOODLANDS

The woodlands of Glen Howe Park are partly semi-natural and partly replanted. Oak, sycamore, beech and holly are the dominant trees with other species including ash, elm, hazel, alder, rowan, larch and Scots pine. There are also a number of exotic species, planted as ornamental specimens during the last century, particularly near to the main entrance to the Park. One of these, rhododendron, is now becoming a significant feature of the site. There are a number of azaleas which can give a good show in late spring, and some of the most outstanding examples of pieris to be found anywhere in the region.

Glen Howe Park also has a diverse flora, including many ferns, mosses and liverworts along the streams, as well as the usual ancient woodland indicator species; bluebells, which make a fine show along the steep slopes, ramsons and yellow archangel.



There is an excellent range of woodland birds which can be seen to very good advantage during the winter and early spring as they come to feed at the feeding station set up in the wood.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

Under the Fuelling a Revolution programme, woodland restoration and access improvement work is taking place to restore the site to its former glory and to maximise its potential as a recreational and educational resource.

The dominance of oak, hazel and other native species will be re-established in selected areas by thinning and group felling, which will also have the effect of creating a more diverse woodland structure. Sycamore, a non-native and highly invasive species, will be particularly favoured for removal.

Other invasive species in need of control are Japanese knotweed and rhododendron. However not all exotic non-native species will be removed, selected areas being left as a managed woodland park.

Access to the park is being improved by upgrading the path system and restoring hand rails, benches and steps. As part of this, access for the disabled will be improved where practical. The beautiful handrails by Alistair Haywood that have recently been erected up the zig-zag path beside the bridge make a superb new feature in themselves.

Drystone walling around the edge of the site will be restored to reinforce the historic boundary of the wood and to deter access away from official entrances to the site. In the top field the new round walled structure has given an opportunity for the dry stone waller, Ian Boyle of 'Stonescapes', (www.stonescapes.me.uk) to display his skill to the full. The structure is called a 'tobhta shelter' (opposite) and is designed to have interesting acoustic characteristics.

Finally, the potential of the area as an educational and recreational resource will be developed through guided walks, events relating to the natural history and historic interest of the Park, children's events and practical management tasks. The wooden picnic shelter, built in the woods in the 1970s for the use of school groups, is to be restored.

VISITING GLEN HOWE

Access to most parts of Glen Howe Park is via Green Lane, and the park is signposted from the main Sheffield-Stocksbridge Road. Good parking is available near to the entrance and there are also basic toilet facilities. There are many well maintained



footpaths throughout the woodland, some of which are suitable for wheelchair users. The site features a number of modern works of sculpture and a joint nature and sculpture trail is proposed for the site. In addition, a local residents group with an interest in the site has recently been established.



The zig-zag path through the trees from the bridge was created by Alistair Hayhurst as part of the *Fuelling a Revolution* project.



There are many fascinating features to discover on a walk through Glen Howe. The beautiful stone ram stands beside the car park.

SURVIVALS OF AN ANCIENT BUILDING TRADITION

It is in some of the agricultural buildings in the Pennine foothills of south west Yorkshire, in the locality of Stocksbridge and Wharnccliffe Side, that examples of timber-framed buildings constructed using an old technique of building with timber frames dating back beyond the Middle Ages, can be identified. These are the local **cruck** buildings.

Cruck buildings are well known features of the upland areas of Britain but are virtually unknown from the south. The western part of South Yorkshire retains the highest concentration in Britain. Almost 150 examples are still standing or have been demolished in the last century.

In these buildings the weight of the roof is carried on a pair of massive timbers called **cruck blades** which rise from the ground and rest against each other at the apex of the roof. They were then fixed with a **tie beam** and a **collar beam**. Pairs of these trusses were connected by a **ridge pole** to the **wall plates** which rested on the ends

of the tie beam. The rafters were supported by **purlins** which rested on the shoulder of the cruck blades. In this way the whole of the weight of the roof, usually stone slated, was held by the cruck beams. Most cruck buildings were small, only 2 to 4 bays, that is 3 to 5 pairs of crucks, but occasionally long barns of 6 bays were built.

Most of the timber framed buildings which survive can only be identified as such from detailed examination of the interior since they were long ago encased in stone and look like old stone built outbuildings. We cannot be sure when most were originally built but the large cruck barn in the farmyard of Green Farm above Stocksbridge was given its stone shell in 1688. Many of these buildings thus date from the 15th and 16th centuries. Oaks Fold barn, which has been renovated and stands in Concord Park, was recorded in 1637.

There is a particularly interesting cluster of cruck buildings around the fascinating hamlet of **Brightholmlee** just above Wharnccliffe Side. The barn at **Swinnock Hall Farm**, immediately north of Glen

