



West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service

West Yorkshire Joint Services

The West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service holds information on the historic environment of West Yorkshire, including records of archaeological remains of all periods and historic buildings of all types, available for public consultation. It also provides advice on West Yorkshire's historic environment to local authorities, developers, landowners, voluntary organisations and everyone with an interest in the archaeology and old buildings of this part of Yorkshire.

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ROUNDHAY PARK CONSERVATION AREA

Historical development and changing character of the CA

Roundhay is situated c. 3m north-east of Leeds and in 1912 the township, with adjacent townships, was absorbed into the borough of Leeds. Today, much of Roundhay is situated within a Conservation Area, comprising mainly Roundhay Park, a public open space, with early 19th century and Victorian suburbs on the fringes of the park. The CA sits mostly upon Elland Flags and coal seams of the Lower Coal Measures with deposits of glacial or recent boulder clay situated on its eastern edge in the vicinity of Cobble Hall Farm and Elmete Primary Centre.

Evidence of early activity at Roundhay is represented by finds of artefacts, many found during the development or disturbance of land that occurred in the 19th century. A Neolithic polished stone axe was found in the vicinity of Roundhay Golf Links, and another near the present entrance to the park. The Bronze-Age is represented by a number of bronze socketed and looped palstaves (a type of prehistoric axe), which include a hoard of 6 found during the digging of foundations of a house in The Avenue, Lidgett Park. These probably represent a trader's hoard of the period c. 1000 to 700BC. Another palstave was discovered at the upper end of Roundhay Gorge c.1883 close to where a Roman lamp had been previously found in 1881. Similarly a Roman altar was uncovered whilst digging for gravel in front of Elmet Hall in 1881, suggesting a Roman temple or high status site in close vicinity.

The majority of the CA sits within the medieval township bounds of Roundhay, apart from an eastern portion that stood in a detached portion of Shadwell township. Roundhay Grange was situated within this eastern section, and was probably the location of an early grange of Kirkstall Abbey, acquired before the mid-12th century. These holding reverted back to the de Lacy family in 1287 to alleviate the Abbey's debts. The first known mention of Roundhay or (Le) Rund(e)heai appears, c.1153, in the confirmation of a grant to the monks of Kirkstall Abbey of 'those lands next to Roundhay'.

Roundhay is not mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086, and may have been a post-Conquest creation from adjacent townships (the township shape in relation to neighbouring townships certainly suggests that it has been created from pre-existing ones), or from other estates now lost. The place-name probably meant 'the round hunting enclosure' derived from a combination of the Old French element rond and Old English (ge)haeg. It has been suggested, however, that a deer park existed here in Saxon times, its name derived from the Saxon term paza meaning fence, relating to the

round or circular shaped paling which enclosed the park.

Medieval documents show that Roundhay comprised a demense manor and park granted to the de Lacy family after the Conquest, and in 1294 Henry de Lacy was granted free warren here which allowed him to hunt game animals and birds. A hunting park was often defined by a park pale or boundary in the form of a ditch, bank, and/or fence, and respective Reeves' accounts for 1373/4 and 1420/1 record repairs to the fence, and the purchase of gate pivots for the gates of the park. Repairs were also carried out to the hunting lodge in the 14th century, the lodge providing shelter for the hunters; the feeding of livestock in winter is also mentioned.

The hunting park is believed to have been the size of the former township as depicted on the Joshua Thorpe's map of 1822, and the O.S. 1847 map, whilst the manor also included certain lands in Shadwell, Thorner, and Seacroft. The park was not only used for hunting, but also used as a source for building material and fuel. Timber from the park was used in 1399 to repair Leeds Dam, which stood on the River Aire and helped control the water for the King's Mill, Leeds. In 1507 wood faggots from the park helped heat the common oven in Leeds. The park's mineral wealth such as coal and ironstone was also exploited and marl was dug to use as a fertiliser to manure the fields. In 1160 the monks of Kirkstall Abbey were granted the right to operate iron bloomeries at Roundhay and Seacroft. Production continued with the de Lacy family in the 13th century and a smelting furnace is recorded at Roundhay in 1295/6. Iron working ceased in the 16th century when raw supplies became exhausted. The field-name Cynder Hills situated adjacent to Wyke Beck, at the southernmost corner of the township, is recorded on Jonathan Taylor's plan of 1803, and most likely refers to waste slag deposits produced from the iron works. Woodland at Roundhay also became denuded over a period of time and a survey of 1628 noted that land here had been cleared, enclosed and new farms established for agricultural purposes. The survey also recorded that coal supplies at Roundhay and Roundhay Grange were now out of use.

The park passed through various ownership and was put on the market in 1799, eventually purchased by Thomas Nicholson and Samuel Elam in 1803. Cartographic evidence shows there was little development within the park and its periphery prior to this period. Settlements in the vicinity were isolated and set within an open landscape. Gledhow to the west of Roundhay, had developed in linear fashion near/around the junction of Gledhow Lane, Lidgett Lane and Long Plantation, with Gledhow Lane providing an access route to Roundhay (Jefferys' Map of Yorkshire 1775). Jonathan Taylor's map of 1803 depicts Roundhay township as containing very little woodland, with a landscape mostly of enclosed fields and a few scattered farmsteads/settlements such as at North Hill on the south side of the township. It was from this period of purchase, in 1803, that the growth of Roundhay commenced. Thomas Nicholson and succeeding family members built a mansion house and, incorporating earlier woodland, created a country estate on the north side of the park, whilst the south side, owned by Elam, was eventually sold for development. The Nicholson family held

the Roundhay estate between 1803 and 1868 and created a landscaped garden of lakes, waterfalls, pleasure garden, summerhouses, an arboretum, lawns, walks and avenues. Other structures including two lodges and workers' housing. A new Anglican church of St John, Wetherby Road, was built by Stephen Nicholson between 1824-26 to the design of architect Thomas Taylor, and adjacent almshouses around 1834. A day school also adjoined the almshouses, possibly built at this time, but its date of construction is uncertain.

Growth within the remaining area of the township remained slow, but after the death of Elam in 1810 his holdings to the south of Wetherby Road were gradually sold for development. A new turnpike road in 1810, from Sheepscar to Roundhay Bridge, was intended to make Roundhay more accessible, but due to poor transport conditions and the distance from Leeds, Roundhay remained more available to the affluent, who had moved away from the sprawl of Leeds, rather than the working classes. Large villas built prior to 1847 on land to the south of Wetherby Road, included Oakwood, The Grange, The Grove, Roundhay Villa, Roundhay Grove and Spring Wood (O.S. 1847). There was little industrial development in this area, apart from a bleachworks that had been established to the south of Wetherby Road by 1829, which stood adjacent to Wyke Beck, with a water channel and reservoir in the vicinity of Roundhay Grove. Despite the availability of building land Roundhay in 1834 remained a 'genteel village' and its 'pleasing views' with an 'air remarkable for its salubrity', continued to attract the merchants of Leeds 'whose delightful villas, walks and plantations, form delightful adjuncts to the general scenery' (Pigot & Co's Commercial Directory 1834). Later villas included Elmet Hall to the east of the township, built by James Kitson who had purchased Roundhay Lodge and adjacent land from the Nicholson family in 1868. Most of the larger villas had been built by 1901.

In 1871 the Nicholsons' estate at Roundhay was put on the market, and was eventually purchased by Leeds Town Council, mostly on the initiative of John Barran, for use as a public park, which eventually opened in 1872. Surplus land was sold off for development. Construction, however, was regulated with rules including the use of stone for building, the screening of views by plantations, and the prohibition of a noisy or offensive trade. From the 1870s, new housing included two large areas on the site of Spring Wood and Lady Wood, and an area near Old Park Road, but growth continued to be slow and concentrated on larger houses for the wealthier classes. In 1877 Roundhay was still, to a great extent, mainly occupied and owned by Leeds merchants. The introduction of trams from Leeds to Roundhay in the late 19th century eventually encouraged growth and made Roundhay and the park more accessible to a wider range of the population. The horse tram route had been replaced by electric power in 1891, creating the first electric operated public tramway using the trolley system in Britain. Larger scale development off Old Park Road occurred between 1893 and 1909 and comprised smaller detached and semi-detached housing, connected by new roads such as The Avenue, Lidgett Park Road, The Drive, and North Park Avenue. Housing was similarly built to the south on both sides of Oakwood

Lane.

Between 1909 and 1938 further development occurred and land was infilled, particularly to the south and south-west of the public park, with new estates to the north and south of Easterly Road. Post-war development continued and comprised more infilling of smaller type housing, and the conversion of larger villas to flats. Houses were built within the grounds of villas. Churches and schools were also built to meet the demands of a growing population. Ladywood Wesleyan Church, Springwood Road was erected in 1873-4 for a congregation of 350, and an adjoining Sunday school was built in 1884. The church replaced two smaller earlier chapels that had stood on Chapel Lane, the first of these chapels being built in 1815. Lidgett Park Wesleyan Church and Roundhay Congregational Church were respectively built in 1906 and 1908, and St Edmunds' church in 1910. The respective Roundhay schools for boys and girls were built in 1925/26 and 1932. The schools had originated from a private school in North Park Avenue in 1903, which later transferred to Gledhow Hill, a mansion house built in 1859, with a 31 acre estate, after its purchase by Leeds Education Authority around 1921.

Roundhay is now an integral part of Leeds. Its historic importance is demonstrated by the large number of Listed Buildings included within the CA, and similarly, the park's importance by its inclusion in the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage (Grade II). The park also represents Roundhay's past history as a hunting park; its medieval history and documentary sources are more fully discussed in Morkhill J., 1891, 'The Manor and Park of Roundhay', Thoresby Society, and Burt, S., n.d. [c. 2002], *An Illustrated History of Roundhay Park*.

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