

Where, in Sheffield, would the following quotes give you clues about the history of the area?



The answer, of course, is in the valley of the River Porter, and its tributary, the Mayfield. This leaflet describes a walk of about 11½ miles, over lanes and public footpaths, which will enable you to trace some of the history of the landscape.

There are several stiles along the route, but the less nimble can appreciate much of the landscape from the public roads.

The walk may be varied by simply following the paths and roads on the map, with due regard for road safety and landowners' property.

Friends of the Porter Valley
Credits

Photos

- 1 Sheffield Local Studies Library
- 7 Andrew Pettigrew
- 8 Andrew Pettigrew
- 12 Jim Kennett
- 13 Andrew Pettigrew

All other Photos and text
Peter Kennett

Sketch

- 2 Heather Clarke

Map

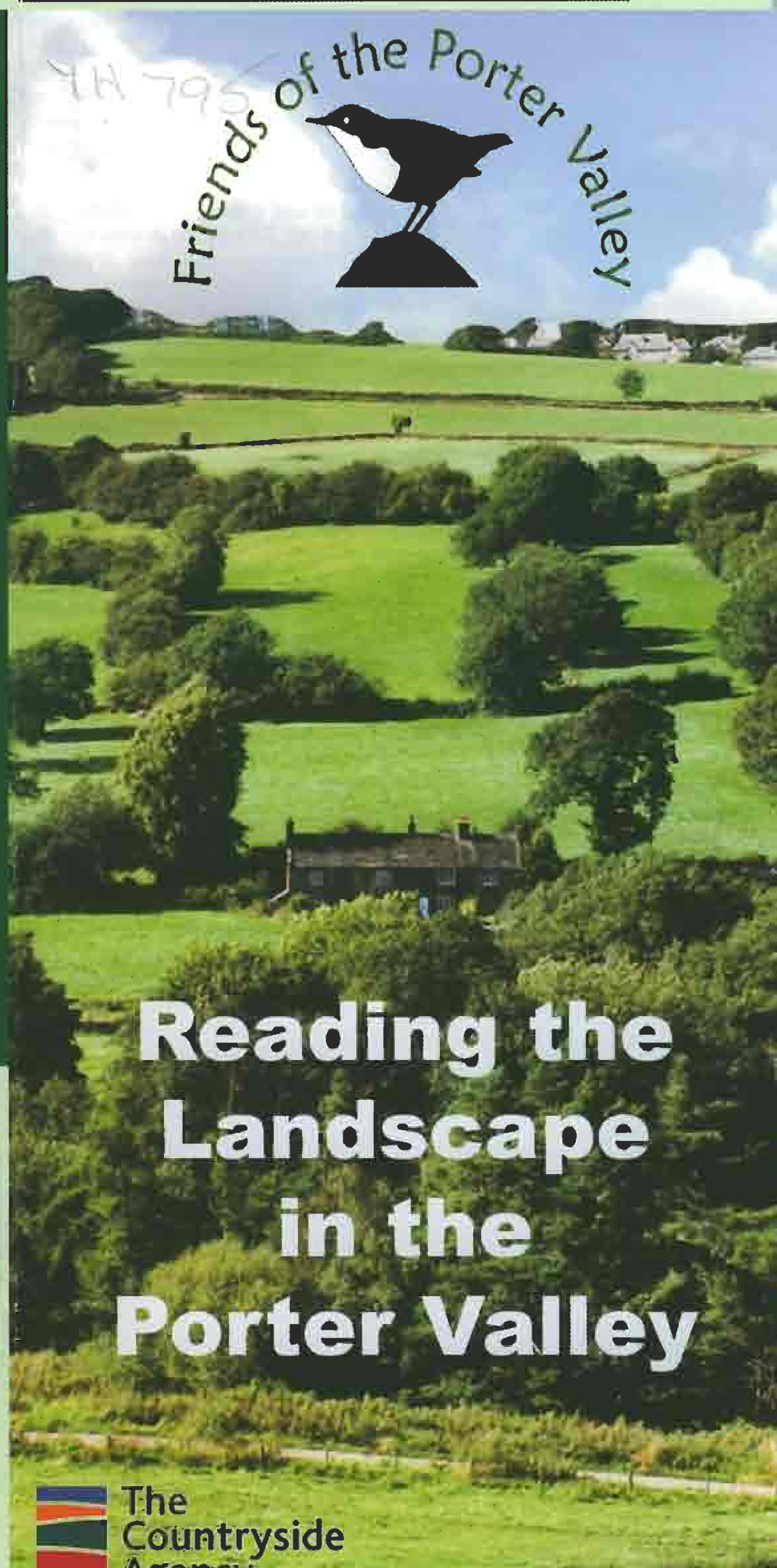
Map based on the 6 inch scale maps by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
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The Friends of the Porter Valley have produced several reports on the archaeology and ecology of the valley – contact the Hon. Secretary.

The dams are described in *Water Power on the Sheffield Rivers* edited by David Crossley, Sheffield Trades Historical Society/Sheffield University Division of Continuing Education, 1989 127pp.

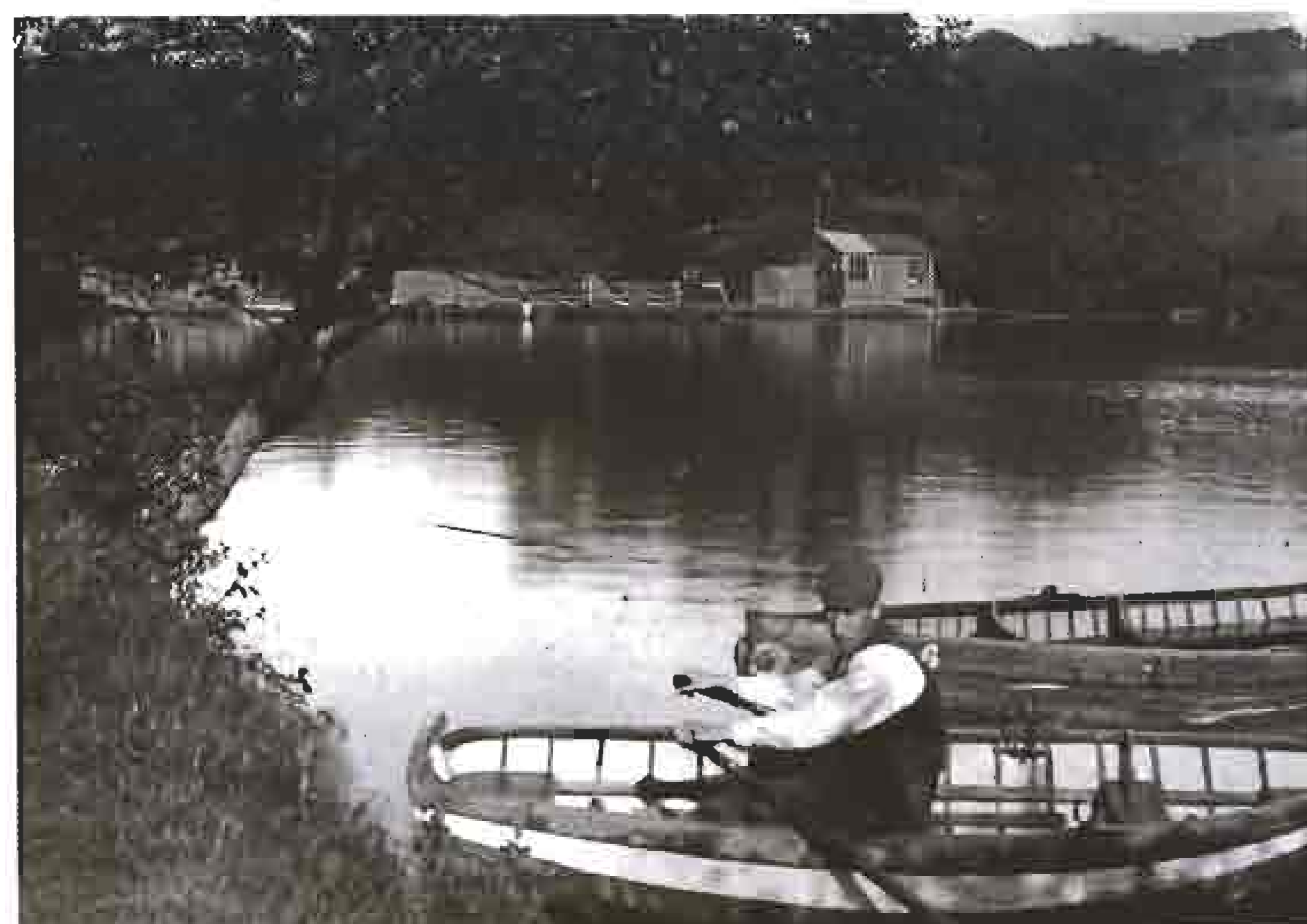
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Reading the Landscape in the Porter Valley



Start from the café at Forge Dam (a short walk from the No.60 or 86 bus stops on Brookhouse Hill) - Go to 1 below.



Forge Dam in Edwardian days Photo: Sheffield Local Studies Library

1 Forge Dam

The Café stands on the site of Whiteley Wood Forge. Here, falling water from the millpond powered a tilt hammer to forge steel into shape. The first reference to the forge is dated 1779, when it was owned by Thomas Boulsover, the inventor of Sheffield Plate, and this forge seems to have been used in the manufacture of saws. By the 1830s there were two large water wheels and even a steam engine, but it all appears to have ceased working by the 1880s.

All that you can see now, through the window of the Café, is the arch over the wheel shaft.

If you turn your back to the Café, you can often see water overflowing down the spillway on the face of the dam itself.

Walking up the ramp in front of the Café brings you to the millpond. The old landing stage where fishermen sit today still has a mooring ring for hired rowing boats. Pleasure boating was established before 1900 and lasted until the 1960s.

The millpond is badly silted up. Most of Sheffield's millponds are fed by water diverted from the river, but at Forge Dam, the whole river passes through the pond. It was partially dredged out in the 1980s, and a silt trap was built upstream, but this has not proved very effective.

Follow the tarmac path for 100 metres around the edge of the pond as far as its northwest corner, but don't go as far as the footbridge over the Porter. Instead, turn right up a narrow and often muddy footpath and begin to climb the slope. - Go to 2.

2 Holly Hags

As you climb the slope notice old thickets of holly on the right hand side, generally grown as a source of winter fodder for livestock several centuries ago. You will also pass a "veteran" oak tree, now truncated, on the right. There are several of these in the valley, and they are probably 400 years or so old.



The path brings you out near the top of Quiet Lane. Turn right onto Quiet Lane, watch out for traffic, especially in rush hour. Turn left up School Green Lane. How does the road get its name? The answer is found after about 225 metres. - Go to 3.

3 Fulwood School



The plaque on the wall of the old School House tells you who gave the most money when the school was established in 1730 (multiply by about 100 for today's values). When numbers increased, a new school was built (now a garage), and the old building became the schoolmaster's house.

Continue up School Green Lane to the footpath on the left, opposite No. 42. Cross the double stile. Head towards the right hand corner of the stables, on the alternative footpath route, but stop when you get opposite the corner of the wall on the right. - Go to 4.

4 Ancient Walls

The base of this wall contains some huge boulders of local sandstone, firmly bedded in the ground. Such boulders are known as "earthfast", and nobody in their right mind would choose them for wall building! Instead, they were moved a very little distance, or not at all, and the wall was built on top of them. The wall itself follows



an irregular course, and some of the fields are very small. This all points to a wall of great antiquity, and it is believed that the fields in this area could be part of a Romano-British settlement, dating from about 2000 years ago. Roman pottery and other artifacts have been dug up in the area, helping to confirm our conclusions from the walls.

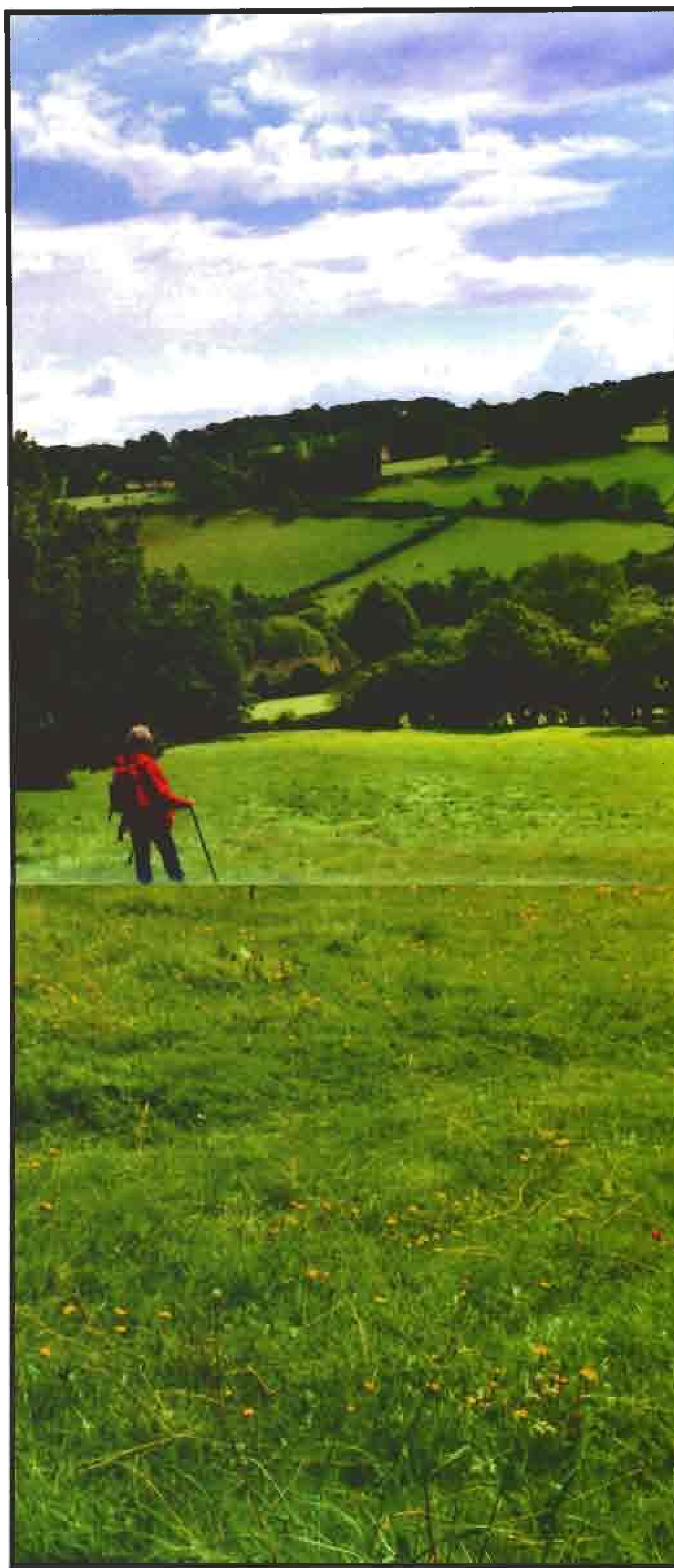
Cross the stile, follow the footpath round the back of the stables along the next wall, with its mature trees, over another stile into the paddock. - Go to 5.

13 Ancient Stone Bridge

A further 100m upstream brings you to an ancient stone bridge, rescued from collapse in 2004. (Seen here before removal of the tree stump growing above the arch.)



Now return to the track junction and take the streamside path to the ancient river crossing at Carr Bridge (14.) Cross the road very carefully and return to Forge Dam along the path just above the river.



View across the valley from location 7, showing field boundaries of various dates

5 Curious Scratches!

About 25 metres along here, on the right, there is a large block (1m. long), lying in front of the wall. In the evening sunlight you can make out some marks on this block. Are they: a) JCB scratches, b) ancient plough marks, c) Roman gambling games, d) ecclesiastical carvings? We really don't know, but with the "eye of faith" some have picked out a kneeling figure in a mitre, praying.....!



This stone was brought in recently by a farmer, but where did the big stones in general come from? Higher up the slope, the hillside is underlain by layers of a sandstone known to geologists as the "Rough Rock". During the Ice Age, the ground beneath the slope was frozen, and it is likely that the blocks slid down the hill during each summer's melt.

When you get up from your knees, have you noticed that the land on the other (north) side of this wall is about 1½ metres higher than where you are standing? This is another indication of an ancient field boundary. Every time the land was ploughed, and aided by natural movement of soil downhill, the soil level increased on the uphill side. Such a difference in level is known as a **lynchet**; there are many of them along our route.

Continue along the footpath towards the stone stile. - Go to 6.

12 Waterfall

If you are keen, you can walk upstream beside the Porter for about 250m to see the waterfall.

The 4m high waterfall is formed from sandstones known as the Redmires Flags.

- Go to 13.



11 Mark Lane Features



Just before the junction of Mark Lane and Clough Lane there is a well marked "lynchet" down to the field - or is it? It is more likely that this change in slope shows where the hard sandstone of the Redmires Flags meets the softer shales underlying the field. Archaeologists and geologists must think carefully about interpreting lumps and bumps in the landscape!

- Go to 12.

10 Corn Mills

When you reach Mayfield Road you will see, opposite you, the silted-up millpond and buildings on the site of the Fulwood Upper Mill, which was used for grinding corn. Archives indicate working mills here from before 1640 until the 1880s.

Cross Mayfield Road onto Mark Lane and cross the Mayfield Brook. Follow Mark Lane round to the left until it joins Clough Lane, near the River Porter.



Spillway at Fulwood Mill (NB: Private Property)

Mark Lane gets its name from its proximity to an ancient boundary "mark" between Hallam and Ecclesall, now lost. - Go to 11.

9 Drains

Follow the footpath as it descends across a large field to Mayfield Rd.

The three large trees look as though they belong to an old field. There is no evidence for it on an 18th Century map.

In the lower parts of the field, look carefully for faint straight lines running across the footpath.

These mark the location of early underground land drainage. One such 'box' drain feeds a rather degraded water hole for the cattle, in the middle of the field, and some stonework remains. - Go to 10.



Box drain elsewhere in the valley

8 Hedgerows



This part of the valley is unusual in having hedgerows planted along the irregular old walls. It is claimed that the age of a hedge can be judged from the number of species of woody plants in them, so these hedges may be as much as 500 years old. By contrast, where the walls and hedges run in straight lines, they are more likely to date from the Enclosure Awards of the late 18th Century: you can see some of these in the distance. - Go to 9.

7 Gateposts



Cross the stile and immediately look for the rather overgrown gateposts to the next field on the right.

These posts are made from rough-hewn sandstone and were installed before farm gates were common. Instead, three wooden bars were inserted between the posts, to keep in the cattle. How do we know? Look for the L-shaped slots on one post and matching square sockets on the other.

The best gate posts were cut from the coarse, pebbly sandstone known as the Rivelin Grit, and quarried in the Rivelin Valley. These were often carefully shaped, and must have been quite costly. Several occur later along the route. Follow the footpath across a small L-shaped field to a stile with stone steps. As you descend these, you are climbing down another lynchet. - Go to 8

6 Spring and Stile

About 8 m before you arrive, look for a square shaped structure in the wall on your right.

This is probably a stone surround to a spring. How old is it? Such features often date back for centuries, but this one may have been rebuilt, since there is a concrete slab near its base.

The stone stile is formed of several rough-hewn steps and a partly shaped (dressed) slab. - Go to 7.