

# WOODHOUSE RIDGE - A HERITAGE TRAIL

This 42 acre (7 Hectare) stretch of near-continuous woodland conceals discretely its history as former common land, an Edwardian park, and industrial traces with cross routes linking communities and workplaces.... not forgetting

its role as a site of a civil war skirmish in *the Battle for Leedes*, (It was shown as "Pikeman Rigge" on John Tuke's 1781 map of Common Land in Leeds) - or as earlier grange land to Kirkstall Abbey - called "Riggeclyf". This information sheet conveys some of what we have gleaned from some valuable local history sources.....

## ABOUT WRAG

Woodhouse Ridge Action Group (WRAG) is a volunteer group, established in 1995. We aim to help The Ridge through practical work, research into its history and biodiversity and to act as a "friends group" in its advocacy. The Ridge is managed by Leeds City Council's Parks and Countryside Service with which we have a community partnership agreement and we also work with the University of Leeds Conservation Society students. We maintain a Facebook page with news and photos, and a website [www.woodhouseridge.org.uk](http://www.woodhouseridge.org.uk)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Information, maps and images courtesy of:  
WRAG members, "Woodhouse Remembered" - Woodhouse Local History Group 1991, "Meanwood - A Local History" Arthur Hopwood and Fred Casperson 1986, "Headingley - Clues to the Past," Eveleigh Bradford 2008, LCC Central Library Local Studies Section, Parks and Countryside Service, Ordnance Survey historic maps  
[www.leodis.net](http://www.leodis.net) - The Leodis historic photograph website  
[www.tracksintime.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.tracksintime.wyjs.org.uk) - Tracks in Time parish tithe maps  
[www.archives.wyjs.org.uk](http://www.archives.wyjs.org.uk) - West Yorkshire Joint Archives  
[www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) - British Newspaper Archive

Get in touch about corrections or information you can offer.....

### a Wood's Mill

This was one of number of mills built alongside Meanwood Beck to use its waters and power for industrial processes. Identified as a corn mill as early as 1600's, its supply was taken upstream at Monk Bridge and ran in a goit to raise a head of water; between 1850 and 1880, a mill pond was excavated to augment the supply's power. It was approached from Wood Lane, formerly called Oil Mill Lane, reflecting the mill's one time use for crushing linseed oil. The disused holding was acquired by the City Council in 1975, the buildings demolished and the land integrated into The Ridge. The pond gradually dried up after the failure of its supply, although you can still see its embanked edge opposite The Vale Stables nursery.



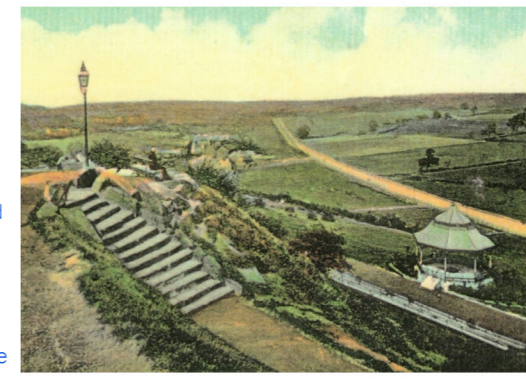
### d The Packhorse Bridge

The grade 2 Listed packhorse bridge provided a trade route crossing of Meanwood Beck from Headingley and Kirkstall, presumably to serve the former Grove Works, an extensive mill and tannery. This later became the site of the Yorkshire Switchgear works, later bought out by Merlin Gerin, before being developed for housing. You can see the bridge from Rawling Way, but currently not use it as a crossing as it's on fenced private land - although remedying this is on WRAG's project wish list.



### g The Bandstand

In a far more open setting than today, and before the advent of Meanwood Road motor traffic, the bandstand formed the centrepiece to entertainment on The Ridge. It is referred to as the "Thrupenny bit," only the plinth remains and WRAG has submitted a bid to the Heritage Lottery fund to safeguard it from further decay, partly rebuild it and re-establish its use.



### k The Melville Place steps

These ancient worn gritstone steps lie on an old route connecting Woodhouse Carr and Buslingthorpe with Woodhouse and Wrangthorn (now Hyde Park corner) - connecting housing in the upper areas to the factories and mills in the valley.



### b Batty's Wood (Battye Wood of old)

Although the thin soils overlying shallow lying rock prevent the trees living to a very great age, this is identified as semi natural ancient oak/ash woodland, so who knows how old Batty's Wood really is? This contemporary photograph taken after its inclusion in the public parkland shows broad paths with numerous seats in recesses, plantations of rhododendrons, lawns maintained under the trees and people in formal attire -



including the gardeners! Since then it has rather reverted to woodland proper, and boasts a stunning Spring bluebell and wild garlic ground flora.

### c The Warburton Memorial

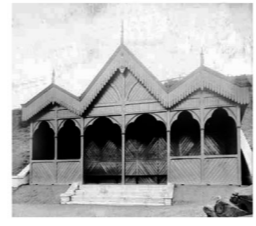
Located on the edge of the Cumberland ginnel by Batty's Wood, this former shelter was known locally as the "Chinese pagoda" - - only the footprint remains today. It commemorated the gift in 1901 of Batty's Wood to the township of Leeds by Alderman John Warburton, as an extension of Woodhouse Ridge.



The land had previously been part of The Earlof Cardigan's Estate, and long before that, with the rest of valley, it was once part of the outlying grange land of Kirkstall Abbey.

### e, h, i The Shelters

There were three elaborate shelters, built at elevated positions along The Ridge, to take advantage of open views across the valley. They formed "eyecatcher" features in the parkland, as well as affording shelter from wind and rain. Only the retaining walls and foundations remain. It was one of the park embellishments provided by the Council after it began laying out The Ridge as a public park. after purchasing it in 1876.



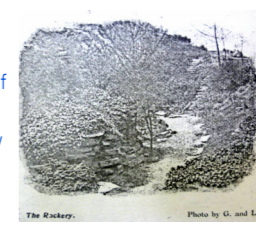
### f The Drinking Fountain

An elaborate carved stone base and arched enclosure formed the housing to this extravagantly designed drinking fountain; these were common features in public parks and this signified the importance of a reliable source of clean water to society then and pride in public parks, in the days when public park provision was at the top of the Council's priorities. This was partly a response to the Victorian public health movement and partly demonstrative civic pride.



### J The Rock Garden

An extensive rock garden was located on the site of a former midden below "Table Top"; legend has it that a horse and cart and its carter fell down the slope into it (it's called "Woodhouse Cliff" after all) . never to be recovered and it then became known as "death valley" Perhaps the rock garden was built to expunge this memory, but much later after its eventual removal (date unknown) it is now more peaceably known as the "dingly dell....."



### z John Atkinson Grimshaw

As a one time resident of nearby Cliff Road, "JAG," the noted Leeds painter frequented The Ridge. A rare watercolour of The Ridge has recently been acquired at auction for the City Art Gallery by a consortium of supporters. The scene, painted in 1882 shows a family group sitting in a field next to Batty's Wood; in the distance, Meanwood and on the horizon is the church spire of Holy Trinity Church. We currently call this field "Cardboard Hill" but it was referred to as "Long Rigg & Whinny Field" (plot 1112) in the 1846 Headingley cum Burley Tithe Map. This showed the land being leased at that time from the Earl of Cardigan to George Thompson for grazing.

