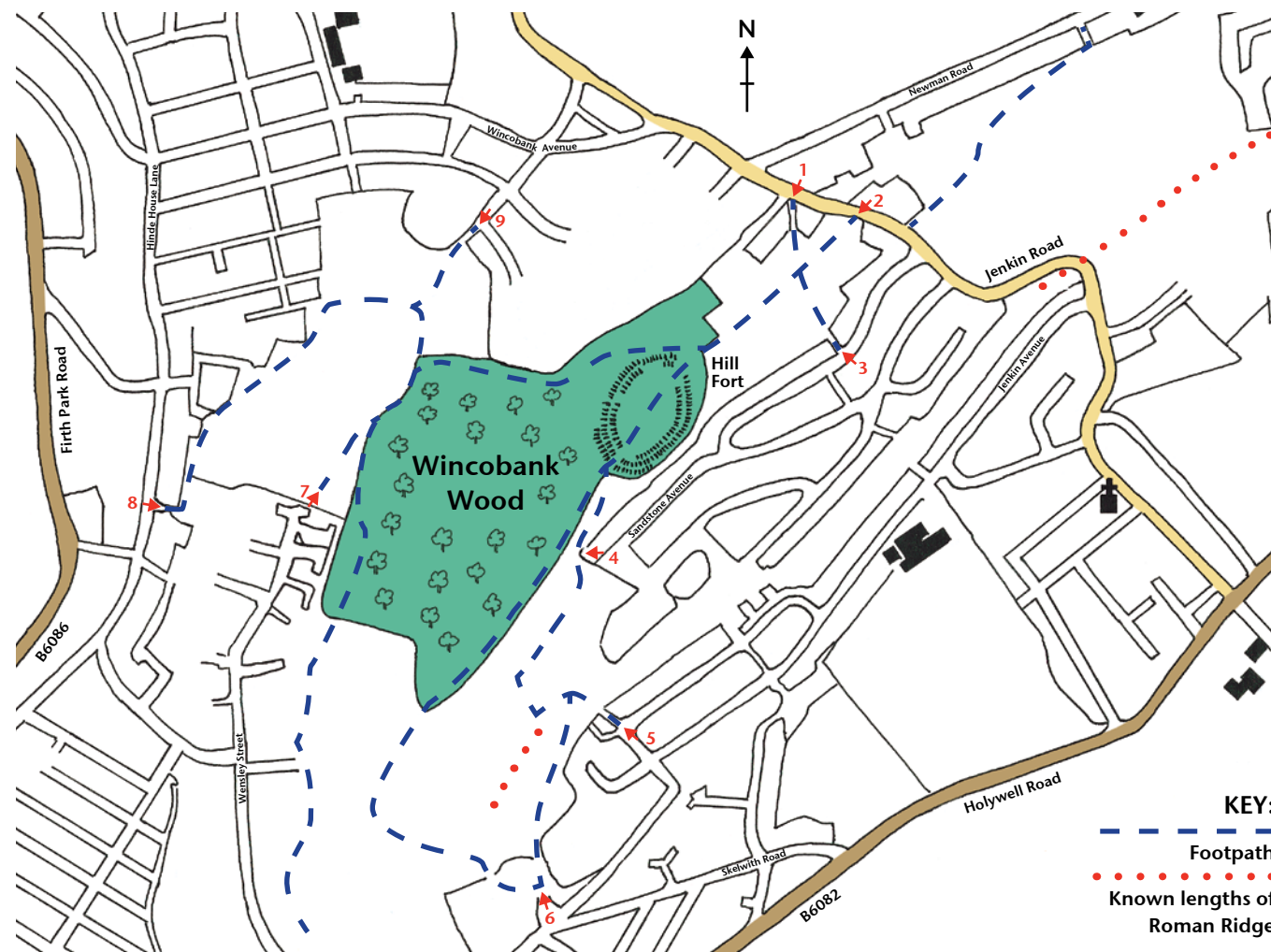




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This leaflet has been devised, written and illustrated by Mel and Joan Jones with maps by Bob Warburton.

VISITING WINCOBANK HILL

Access to the hill, including the hill fort and the wood, is free and unrestricted at all times. There are various access points as shown on the map above by the numbers 1-9. They are from Jenkin Road (1) and (2), from Fort Hill Road (3), from Sandstone Avenue (4), from Beacon Road (5), from Winco Road (6), from Wensley Street (7), from Hindewood Close (8) and from Bluebell Road (9). Your visit to Wincobank Hill will be more interesting if you have a pair of binoculars with you.

WINCOBANK HILL AS A VANTAGE POINT

Wincobank Hill is not only an important historic site, it is also a wonderful vantage point. To the south-west and west there are views over the northern suburbs of Sheffield and to the north-west to the woods beyond Grenoside. To the north across Blackburn Brook is the wooded Grange Park and beyond that Keppel's Column and the spire of Wentworth church.



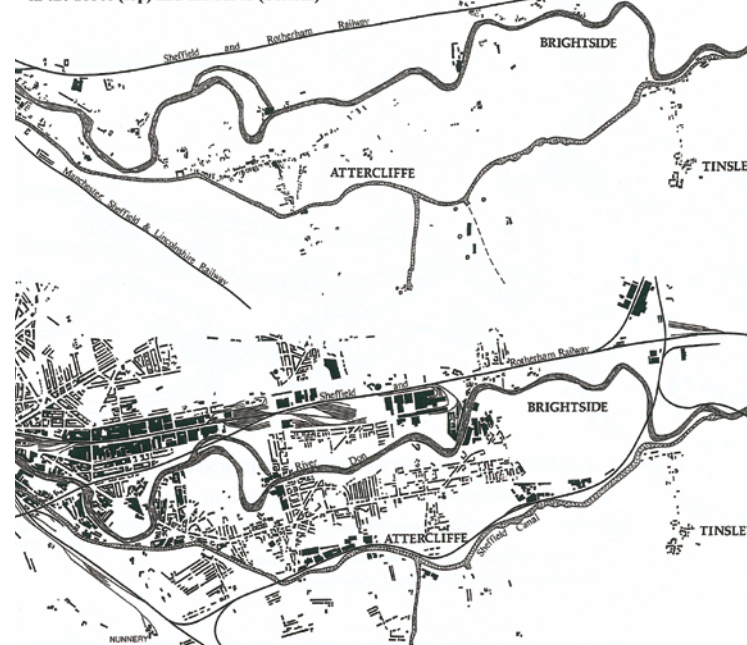
Turning to the north-east Canklow Wood in Rotherham can be clearly seen. This was the site of another Iron Age fort and accompanying field systems. Looking to the south-east there are clear views up the Lower Don valley from Blackburn Meadows and the M1 motorway to Hyde Park and Park Hill flats and the city centre. On a clear day on the horizon in the south Norton water tower and the high rise blocks at Herdings are also clearly visible.

THE VIEW INTO THE LOWER DON VALLEY

Until the middle of the 19th century the Lower Don valley was still a predominantly rural area. Its main clusters of settlement in Brightside, Attercliffe and Tinsley were still separated from the then borough of Sheffield and from each other by arable fields, meadowland, cow pastures and woodlands.

From about 1850 the valley was steadily transformed to form part of the heavy industrial belt stretching from Sheffield to Rotherham and beyond. The first phase of development concentrated on the manufacture of railway components – machine parts, tyres, boilers and springs and railway lines – and steel for guns, shells and armour plate for the ships of the Royal Navy.

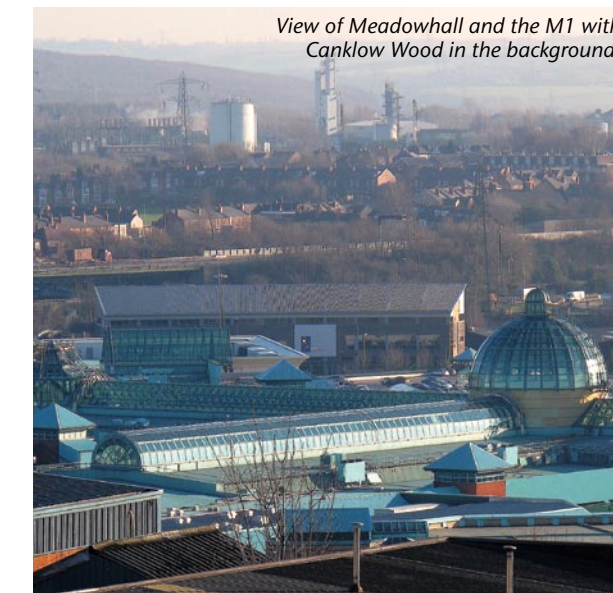
SHEFFIELD'S LOWER DON VALLEY:
in the 1850s (top) and the 1890s (bottom)



By 1890 'common grade' steel products had been replaced by a concentration on the manufacture of special steels, armaments and heavy engineering. Chromium steel for shells, nickel steel for armour plate and stainless steels for gun barrels were perfected by firms in the Lower Don valley. By the beginning of the First World War the valley had become 'the greatest armoury the world has ever seen'. By the 1950s the whole valley was continuously occupied by works, tips, railways and their sidings, the canal, gasworks, sewage works and a power station.

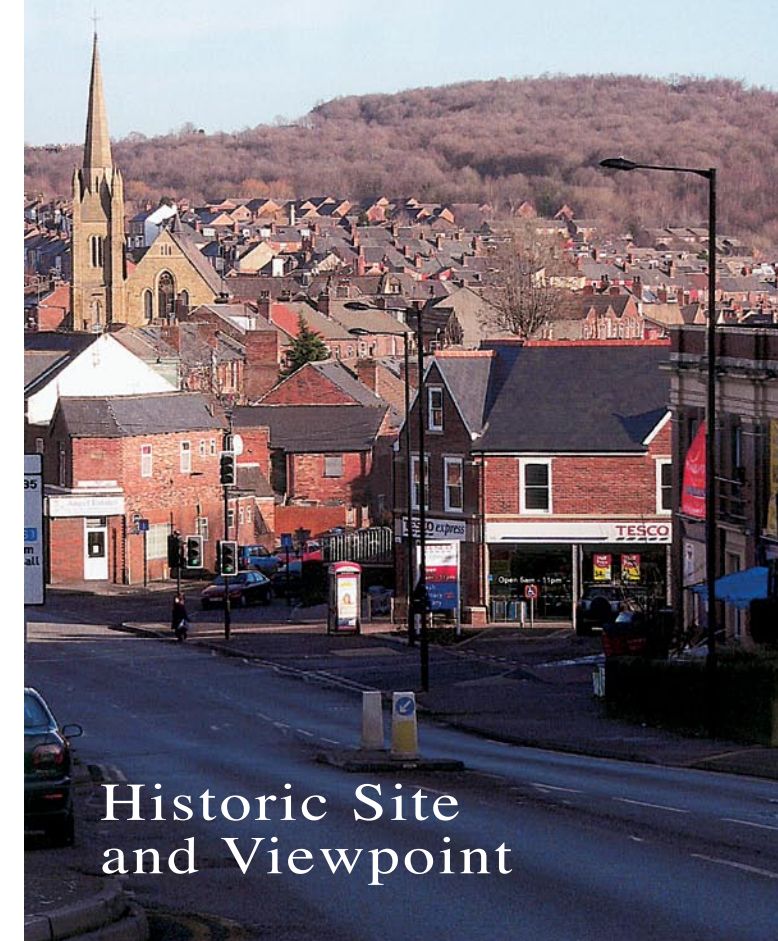
This powerhouse of industry was laid waste by the recession of the early 1980s and almost overnight 17,000 jobs were lost, firms with famous names went into liquidation and soon the valley was scarred by empty works, demolition sites and acres of rubble and twisted metal. Sheffield Forgemasters, created from the merging of some of the most famous names in the industry, was one of the few firms that managed to keep its head above water, and now is a prosperous concern.

In the last twenty years the valley has been transformed. Dominating the eastern end of the valley, beside the M1 motorway on the site of Hadfield's East Hecla steel works is the Meadowhall Shopping Centre, with its 270 stores and free parking for 12,000 cars.



New leisure and sports facilities have been in the forefront of regeneration projects. For example, the Arena holds 12,000 people and hosts concerts by international pop stars and is the home of Sheffield Steelers ice hockey team, the Don Valley Stadium is the largest athletics stadium in the UK, the English Institute of Sport provides state-of-the-art facilities and support services for world-class athletes and iceSheffield contains two Olympic-size ice rinks.

WINCOBANK HILL



Historic Site and Viewpoint



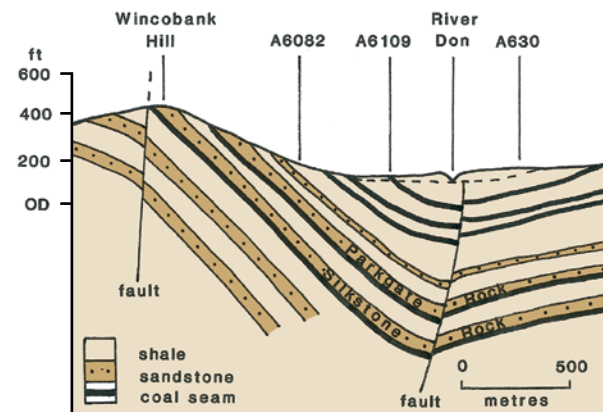
THE HILL

Wincobank Hill dominates the Lower Don valley in north-east Sheffield. It rises at its highest point to only just over 500ft (153m) but as the land slopes away very steeply in all directions, its presence is felt for some miles around – especially to the south-east in the Don and Rother valleys where the land is flat or gently undulating.

The reason for its existence is very obvious if the summit is approached from the south-west, from the direction of Grimesthorpe. As the top of the hill is approached sandstone is everywhere exposed at the surface.



The simplified geological cross-section below shows that the rocks here – shales and coal seams as well as sandstones – have been affected by faulting and dip steeply towards the Don valley before levelling out under the valley itself. This type of geological contortion with one steeply dipping limb followed by relatively level strata is called a **monocline**.



The cross-section also shows that the sandstone forming the highest part of the hill is called Silkstone Rock. This outcrops at the surface in a north-east – south-west direction and the result is a long narrow ‘hogsback’ hill, sloping away steeply to the north-west towards Firth Park and Shiregreen and to the south-east towards the Lower Don valley. This hogsback has been cut through to the north-east by the Blackburn Brook at Meadowhall and to the south-west by a minor stream at Grimesthorpe, so that it also slopes steeply in those directions.

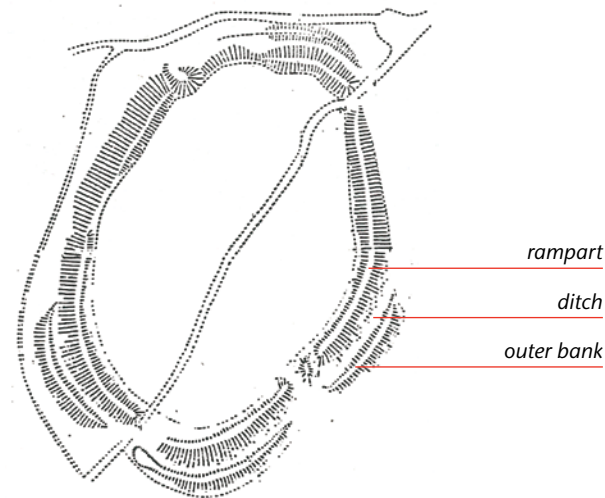
The result is a dry, easily defended hilltop with good all-round views. This made it an attractive location for occupation in the prehistoric period.

The name of the hill in its more or less modern form, as **Wincowe**, was not recorded until 1442 and appears to be derived from *Wineca* an Anglo-Saxon personal name and the Old Norse *haugr* meaning a mound or hill, and so meaning ‘Wineca’s hill’. However, before that it appears to have been called **Winkley** which is most probably a corruption of Winklow, *-low* being the Old English *hlaw*, which like the Old Norse *haugr* also means a hill or mound.



THE HILL FORT

At the summit of the hill is the hill fort. It consists of an oval, defensive enclosure of just over 2.5 acres (one hectare) surrounded by a single rampart with an external ditch. The material from the excavated ditch has been thrown up into an outer bank. Today the grass covered rampart, which at one point rises about 9 feet (2.8 metres) above the bottom of the ditch, is more or less complete except for three breaks, through two of which – in the south-west and north-east – passes a long-established track, called Wincobank Wood Lane. The ditch and outer bank are absent along most of the western side of the fort and along the northern half of the eastern side.



Excavations by Sheffield City Museums in 1899 and 1979 have shown that the rampart was originally built as a very substantial stone wall. The interior of the wall was composed of earth and sandstone rubble bonded together by timbers. The inner side of the wall was faced by small unmortared dressed stones, and the outer side by large, unmortared dressed stones. It is not clear how high the original rampart was, but it would almost certainly have been topped by a timber palisade. No excavations have been made inside the fort and so whether there are any signs of occupation in the form of post holes for buildings or storage or other pits is unknown.



When the excavations were made in the rampart, charred timbers were recovered, and in the rubble core there were signs of vitrification, i.e., the filling had been fused into a glass-like substance by intense heat. The charring suggests that the rampart was destroyed by fire.

Using a scientific technique called radiocarbon dating (C14) it is possible to put an approximate date on some archaeological objects. Charcoal from burnt timber taken from the rampart in 1979 gives an approximate date of 500 BC. This suggests that the main rampart was built in the middle of the Iron Age. It was probably built as a result of conflict between neighbouring tribes wishing to control the Don valley.

There is also evidence that the hilltop had been frequented at a much earlier date than the Iron Age. Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age, c. 8,000-3000 BC) flint tools have been found on the hilltop. These would have been made by a moving band of hunter-gatherers who made virtually no impact on the environment that they inhabited.

It has long been believed that the Wincobank hill fort was occupied during the early Roman period to check the northern advance of the Roman armies. The Romans built their own fort in AD 54 only two miles away on the opposite side of the Don valley at what became known as Templeborough.

Some way down the hill towards the Don valley is the remnant of another earthwork, misleadingly called the Roman Ridge. This linear earthwork stretched for almost 11 miles along the northern side of the Don valley from Sheffield to Mexborough. Long thought to be prehistoric, some writers believe it was built sometime between 450-600 AD after the collapse of the Roman Empire, possibly to defend the Celtic kingdom of Elmet from the advancing Anglo-Saxons. If so, it is possible that Wincobank hill fort was re-occupied.

Just to the north of the hill fort, approached along a paved track from Jenkin Road is the site of the demolished Wincobank House and its observation tower.

Wincobank House by M. Davenport (1938).



THE WOOD

Occupying the western slopes of the hill are the remnants of an ancient coppice wood dominated by oak and birch with the ground covered by wavy-hair grass and heather. The wood has a very noticeable coppice-like structure, something quite rare in Sheffield now, but once commonplace. This means that most trees have multiple stems growing from ground level, usually the result of deliberate management for small-sized poles. However, in the case of Wincobank Wood much of the coppice structure is the result of illegal felling during the last 100 years. Most of the trees in the wood are sessile oak, identified by their stalked leaves and un-stalked acorns.



In the past the wood, which until the late 19th century also covered the summit of the hill including the hill fort, was managed as a coppice wood and was mentioned in surveys of local coppice woods, or ‘spring woods’ as they were called, in 1600 and 1637. It was managed in this way until 1904 when most of Wincobank Hill was given by its owner, the Duke of Norfolk, to the people of Sheffield as a recreation ground. The last falls of wood were purchased by the owner of Grimesthorpe Colliery for pit props.

