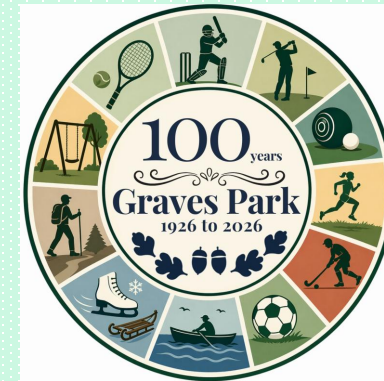


Graves Park 1926- 2026:

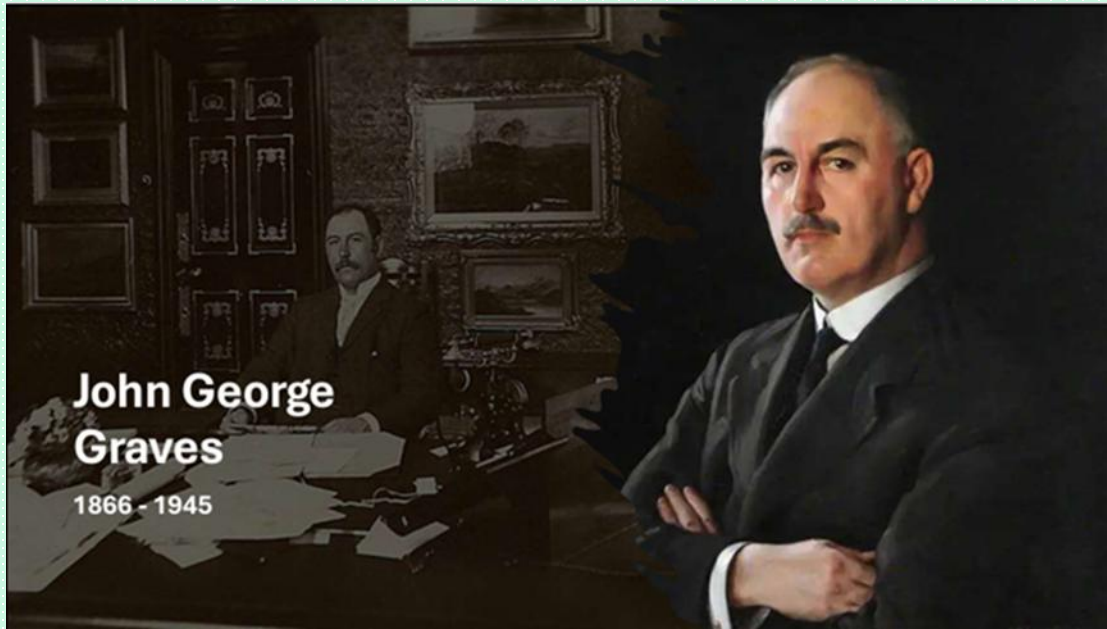


**GRAVES PARK
CENTENARY**



**Friends of
Graves Park**

Charity no: 1080407



100 years of Graves Park

On 2nd December 1925, J. G. Graves signed the conveyance giving the first part of Norton Park to the citizens of Sheffield. 154 acres of the Norton Park Estate were purchased by Councillor and Mrs. J.G. Graves and presented to the Corporation as a gift to the City of Sheffield, for use as a public park. A sum of £20,000 was paid for the land, roughly equivalent to £1.58 million today.



On 3rd June 1926, the park, named Graves Park by the Corporation in honour of Sheffield's benefactor, was officially opened to the public. At three times the size of Norfolk Park, this new public ground was the largest in Sheffield.

The Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress, accompanied by Councillor and Mrs J.G. Graves, head the procession at the opening ceremony.

J G Graves: Sheffield's benefactor

John George Graves was born (22nd August 1866) and brought up in Horncastle, Lincolnshire. His family were Wesleyan Methodists. When he was about 8 years old, the family moved to Heckmondwike in the West Riding. Graves attended Batley Grammar School, leaving at age 14 to take up an apprenticeship in Sheffield, for which his father paid 30 sovereigns.



Photograph of the shop in Gibraltar Street, where Ald. Graves served his apprenticeship. He is seen standing on the right of the doorway, in which the proprietor and his family are grouped.

When his apprenticeship finished, he started his own business as a watchmaker, setting up business in Furnival Street, then moving to Surrey Street.



One of the watches produced by J G Graves and sold by mail order



A YMCA friend gave Graves the idea of mail order trading and after he received a first order from Australia, he decided to pursue this method of trading, including accepting payments by instalment. From these early beginnings, Graves built his very successful business empire.

Alderman J G Graves

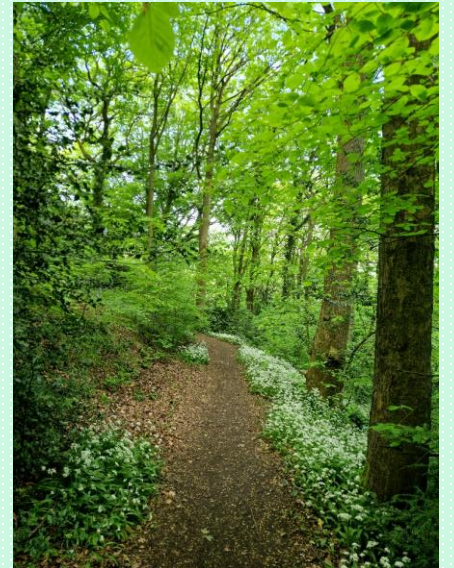
Graves was invited to stand for the Nether Hallam ward as councillor and was duly elected. He became Sheffield's Lord Mayor and an Alderman in 1926 and was given the Freedom of the City in 1929.



What were his intentions in buying the park?

This is perhaps best explained in J G Graves's own words:
Extract from "Some Memories" by Ald. J G Graves (1944): Page 58-60

"Soon other desirable increases of parkland were made at the public expense, and gradually the idea took route in our governing body, that our fast-growing and not too well housed population did not exist solely as wage earners for the use and betterment of the employing portion of the community, but had their own physical and mental needs, among which could be reckoned the longing for natural beauty, and adequate fresh air and physical exercise.



*Graves Park
Woodland*

“So, with the greatest goodwill and encouragement of all public efforts to attain such desirable ends, I took upon myself to open negotiations for such open unspoiled country as I could find within reach of transport facilities, which could be developed for pleasure and exercise purposes.

*Bowling Green and Tennis Courts,
Graves Park*



“In all these efforts I had the most capable and willing co-operation of Mr. Partington, the estate surveyor of that period. Our first search was for some suitable land for use as playing fields, of which there was thought to be an inadequate supply for the needs of the city. This enquiry took us to Norton, where we had hopes of finding a few acres of accessible land suitable for cricket and football.

*North Side of Graves Park with
Derbyshire Hills in the distance*



“Our search for well turfed land proved quite satisfactory, but instead of it being the end of our enquiry, it proved to be only the beginning, and instead of resulting in the acquisition of some cricket and football pitches, it gradually led to the acquisition, by different purchases, of the magnificent park of varied natural scenery to which the Corporation attached the name of ‘Graves Park’.

Graves Park Ponds



“I will not attempt to describe in all detail the attractiveness of this unspoiled stretch of public property. Those who know it will need no such description and to others who do not know it, no verbal description can do justice to its variety and charm, or to the appeal that it makes to the thousands of city dwellers for whom it affords refreshment and relief from City toil and monotony.”



*The Cascade,
Graves Park*

The position of Graves Park, above the “smoke line” of the pollution from Sheffield’s heavy industry, gave the citizens somewhere close to home for fresh air and exercise. Now, just as then, the fresh air of the Peak District blows from the west and visitors can see the Derbyshire hills from the park on any clear day.



The Grand Opening



The great and the good of Sheffield were invited to the grand opening, there was a civic procession and large crowds turned up to cheer Councillor Graves and thank him for his wonderful gift.

Once acquired, the Corporation set about laying out “numerous walks for the convenience of visitors”. By the time of the official opening on 3rd June 1926, the park had already been open to the public since the early spring and thousands of people had taken walks.



GRAVES PARK GIFT.

Donors Receive Council's Address and Thanks.

The conveyance deeds of Graves Park, Norton, were formally handed to the Lord Mayor of Sheffield (Alderman J. Benson) yesterday by Councillor J. G. Graves, who was accompanied by Mrs. Graves.

Asking the donors to accept in return an illuminated address of thanks, the Lord Mayor said the park would be used with pleasure by millions of people, and it would belong to the city of Sheffield for ever.

Councillor Graves, returning thanks for the address, said he considered the really fortunate thing in the whole business, for which he could claim no credit, was the fact that there existed such a beautiful and happily placed piece of country to be taken over and to be used for generations to come.

He would take a citizen's pride in seeing the development of this beautiful estate for the good of the city. In time to come they would all realise it was a great addition to civic amenities to have a beautiful bit of country like that to which people could go for half a day and spend the time in as lovely surroundings as they could find if they went fifty miles away, and with no more cost than a tram fare.

Thanks to Late Civic Heads.

3rd December 1925

**Sheffield Daily
Independent**

19th January 1927

**Sheffield Daily
Independent**

Longshaw Moors.

The tragedy on Longshaw Moors is a reminder that about a couple of years ago a suggestion was made through the "Sheffield Independent" that 11,000 acres of this great tract of land should be purchased by the city of Sheffield for the use of its citizens.

It was then pointed out that Brighton had bought part of the South Downs; Hastings had secured Beachy Head, and that other municipalities had made similar purchases.

The suggestion, however, did not meet with general favour. It was pointed out, in reply, that there were large estates, much nearer the city than Longshaw, which people would prefer. One of them was Norton Park. A few months later Alderman Graves came along and presented this delightful spot, now Graves Park, to the city.

A GRAVES PARK SUGGESTION.

Sir,—Everyone in Sheffield must feel grateful to Councillor Graves for his generous gift of Norton Park to the city.

If, in the matter of open spaces, we do not even now, as "Current Topics" points out, compare too well with other large towns, there is one point on which we have not attempted to fall into line with the progressive northern towns—I mean in the provision of bird sanctuaries in our parks for the attraction and preservation of wild birds. Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and others have followed the fine example set by the London parks authorities. At the moment, Glasgow Corporation is considering the dedication of 15 square miles of the Ardgool Estate as a sanctuary for animals and birds. Would it not be an excellent thing if Norton Park, with its fine woodlands and ponds, provided Sheffield with its first bird sanctuary? The cost of making certain secluded parts attractive to, and safe for, wild bird visitors would be small, and such reserves need not take away from the spaces devoted to sport. As things are at present the rapid growth of the city is driving the more rare birds from their old haunts, and Norton is a district most suitably placed as being well outside the more crowded areas. Such bird sanctuaries would prove of true educational value. The children too often get their only knowledge of our fine national heritage of bird life from wretched caged birds in the back streets.

It is still possible to hear the weird hootings of the owl and to see the unspeakably lovely blue flash of the kingfisher not half-an-hour from a certain Sheffield tram terminus, but these will soon be things of the past. It is high time that we made an effort to save some of these beautiful things. Soon it will be too late.—Yours etc.,

MEMBER OF THE R.S. PROTECTION
OF BIRDS.

10th October 1925

Sheffield Daily Independent

**NEW BEAUTY
SPOT FOR
SHEFFIELD.**

**GRAVES PARK
OPENING**

CIVIC CEREMONY.

THE FORMAL OPENING of Graves Park, Sheffield, has been fixed for Thursday, 3 June, when members of the City Council, headed by the Lord Mayor (Alderman Joseph Benson), will take part in the ceremony.

The park has actually been open to the public since the early spring, and thousands of people have taken walks through its glorious acreage.

It is the magnificent gift of Councillor J. G. Graves, after whom it is named, and it is by far the largest park in Sheffield. Covering 154 acres, it is, roughly, one-sixth of the area of the parks and open spaces which were previously owned by the Corporation.

Twelve parks of the size of Weston Park could be placed inside it; and it is three times as big as Norfolk Park, which was previously the largest in Sheffield. There are three acres of water in it.

Above Smoke Level.

Tyng near the Woodseats tram terminus, the junction of Chesterfield and Cobnar roads, it is 700 feet above sea level and, therefore, well above what is known as the Sheffield smoke level. It gets all the invigorating breezes from the moorlands, on whose fringe it lies, and it has a great natural beauty.

Delightful woodlands enclose almost the whole of the middle of the park, except where the trees give place to three lakes, two of them suitable for boating; and the third, and smallest, almost ideal for youngsters to sail model boats on.

Hidden from the roadways by trees are open spaces which will make ideal football and cricket pitches, tennis lawns and bowling greens.

Preserving Natural Beauty.

Already the Corporation have laid out numerous walks for the convenience of visitors, but nature will be interfered with only in so far as such is necessary for comfort.

The formal opening will not, in any way, interfere with the use of the park by the public during the Whitsunide holidays, and if the experience of Easter is anything to judge by, many thousands of people will visit it during the coming holiday. At that time the park will be looking at its best.

At the opening ceremony the Lord Mayor will declare the park open to the public in perpetuity; and the donor (Councillor J. G. Graves), and Alderman W. F. Wardley, the chairman of the Parks Committee, will also speak.

Graves Park Opening.

Thursday, 3 June, should be a memorable day in the history of Sheffield, for that date has been fixed for the formal opening of Graves Park.

It will give the many thousands of citizens who will enjoy the benefits of this beautiful estate in the future an opportunity of showing their appreciation of the generosity of its donor, Councillor J. G. Graves. He is already assured of the gratitude of this and future generations of dwellers in this



Councillor Graves.

industrial centre for preserving in perpetuity for the use of citizens one of the finest estates in the district.

It is interesting to note that the Lord Mayor (Alderman Benson), who will perform the opening ceremony, will open a park whose boundaries come within a hundred yards of the cottage at Little Norton where he was born.

18th May 1926

**Sheffield Daily
Independent**

18th May 1926

Sheffield

Independent

"SHEFFIELD INDEPENDENT" PHOTOGRAPH.



"SHEFFIELD INDEPENDENT" PHOTOGRAPH.

Skaters were to be seen all day yesterday on the ice at Graves Park, Sheffield. The surface is perfect, and the biting air speeds up the fun.

Skaters in
Graves Park
1930



Summerhouse,
(possibly
formerly the
Tower House)

Summer House. N. www.picturesheffield.com



www.picturesheffield.com

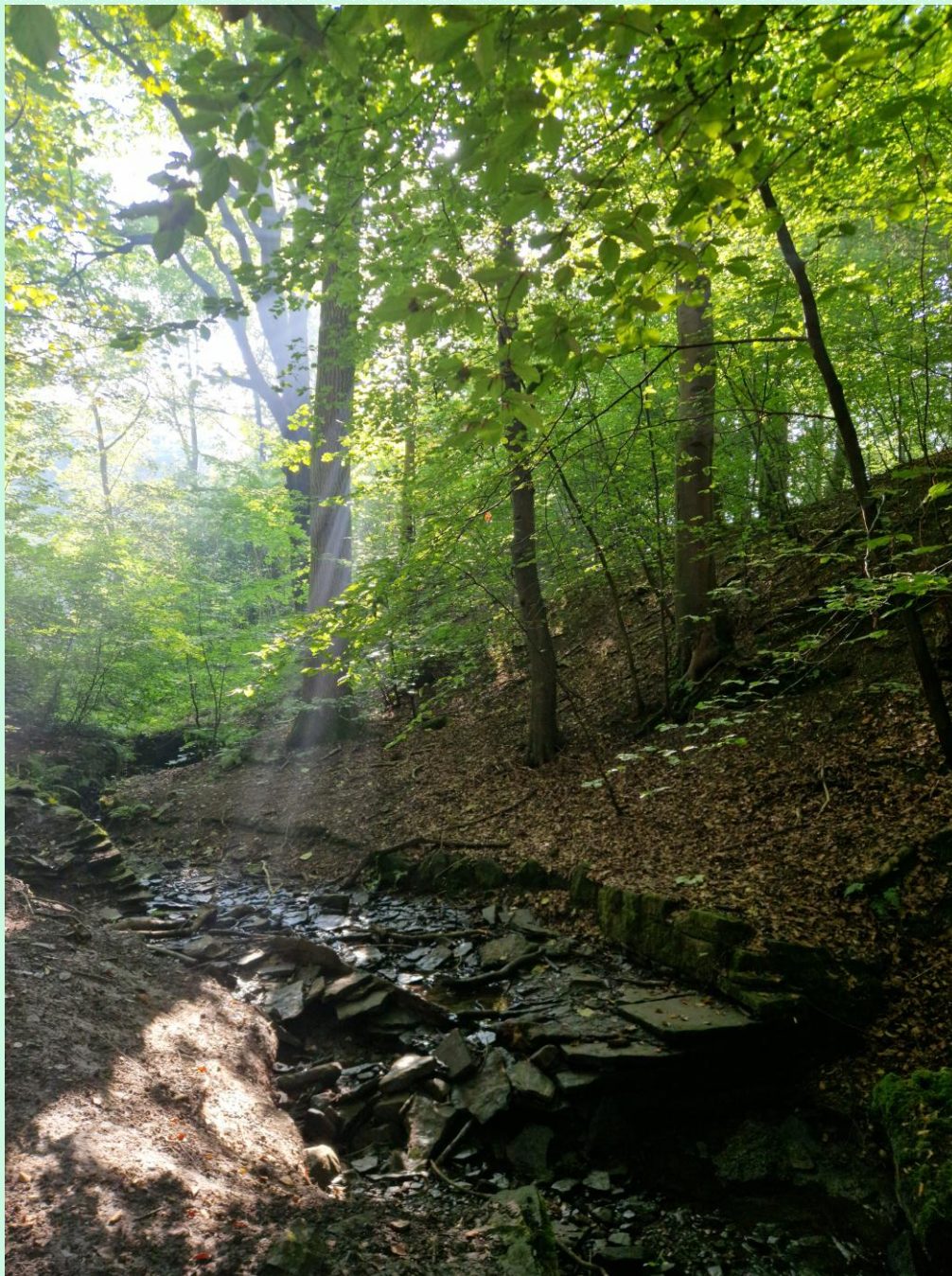
North
Entrance and
Coach
House (Top
of Derbyshire
Lane)



Summerhouse
in the 1920s



View from the
Summerhouse
window towards
Norton Hall



Ancient
Woodland in
Graves Park



Mr. Frankham and
Peter Rothwell in
Graves Park 1941
Cowmouth Farm in
the background





Bole Hill Farm
and the ancient
barns: part of
original J G
Graves gift



Tennis in
Graves Park:
view from a
house on
Charles
Ashmore
Road 1927

The Graves heritage includes

1903 Presents Pearl Street Children's Playground –his first gift.

1926 Presents Graves Park (154 acres) to the City.

1927 Opens The Pavilion in Graves Park.

1928 Presents:

- £10,000 towards the cost of purchasing Ecclesall Woods (306 acres).
- £20,000 for building of Graves Art Gallery.
- £10,000 towards costs of building Central Library.
- Offers a number of paintings from his own collection.

1929 Concord Park presented to the city.

The Graves heritage includes

1930 J G Graves Charitable Trust formed, funded by shares in J. G. Graves Ltd.

1931 Woodseats Playground section of Graves Park purchased.

1931 Matthew Street Playground

1932 Purchased final section of Whiteley Woods (9 acres).

1932 Stamford Street Playground, off Paget Street.

The Graves heritage includes

1933 Crown Alley(Park) Playground, Osborne Street (Pitsmoor) Playground, Surrey Road (Darnall) Playground, Bacon Lane (Attercliffe) all opened.

Playgrounds at Tinsley and Woodthorpe also opened.

1933 Presents Blacka Moor (448 acres)

1933 Assists rebuilding of outpatients department at Royal Infirmary.

1934 Purchases Richmond Park (40 acres) for sports.

1934 Graves Art Gallery opened and named after Graves.

1934 Presents Tapton Court for use as nurses' homes.

1934 Begins scheme for building Graves Trust Homes for Aged Persons in conjunction with the Corporation.

1934 Purchases Cliffe Park for the people of Dronfield.

The Graves heritage includes

1935 Finances new wing at Children's Hospital.

1935 Purchases Beauchief Gardens

1935 Purchases Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet

1936 Finances a Students Union -The Graves Building is still present within the new SU building, though the interior is much altered.

1936 South section of Graves Park purchased, including Norton Nurseries and the Norton Woodseats Cricket ground.

The Graves heritage includes

1937 Opening of rebuilt Weston Park Museum and Graves extension at the Mappin Art Gallery costing £27,000.

1937 Donates 12 acres at Bole Hill (presumably Crookes)

1937 Opening of Ornamental Garden and Fountain in Balm Green.

1938 Presents Limb Valley, Ryecroft Glen, and Porter Clough, forming part of the 'Round Walk'.

1938 Contributes to purchase of Whirlow Brook Park.

The Graves heritage includes

1939 Presents Forge Dam.

1939 Helps towards building funds of YWCA

1939 Purchases Grice Collection of Chinese Ivories for the City, permanently displayed in the Graves Art Gallery.

1941 Gives £250,000 to Government towards war efforts.

1942 Purchases Birley Edge (62 acres) to extend the Green Belt.

1942 Purchases Stubbing Farm at Birley Carr (for the revenue to be used in the maintenance of Balm Green Garden).

The Graves heritage includes

1943 Establishes Institute of Radiotherapy.

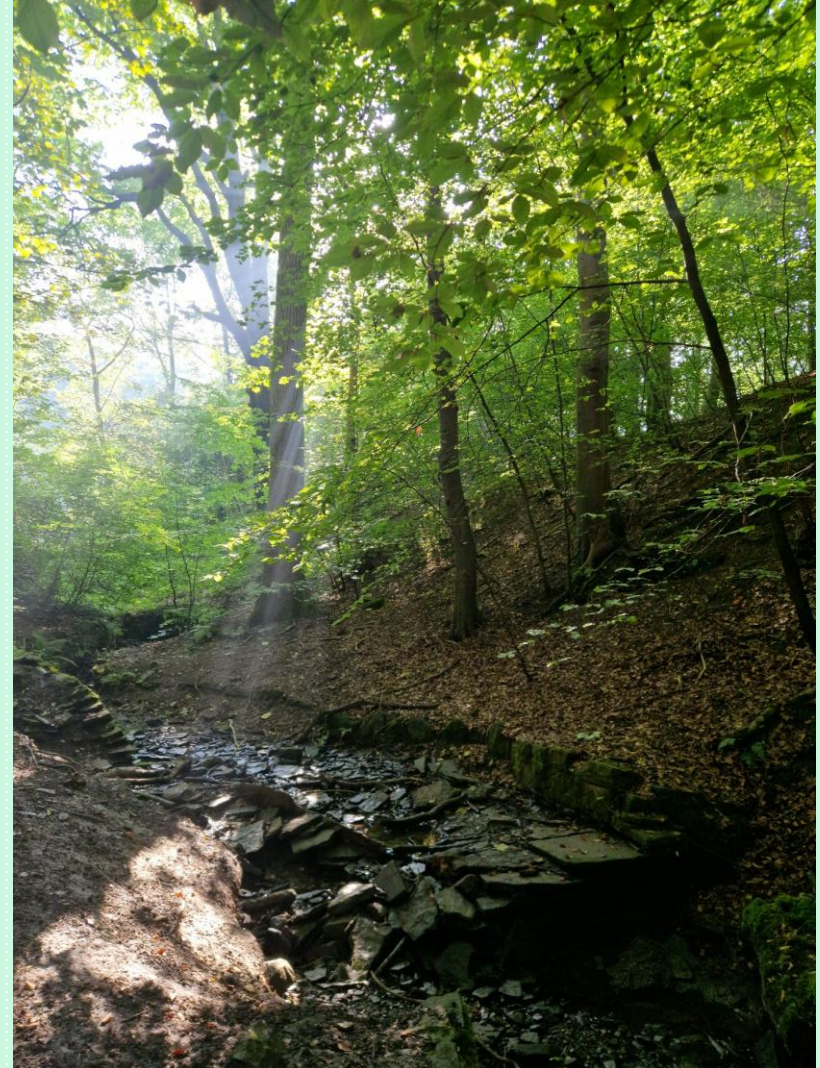
- New premises for a cancer treatment hospital were planned before WW2, originally as part of the Royal Hallamshire Hospital.
- In 1965 the foundation stone for the hospital and the J. G. Graves Institute of Radiotherapy was laid.
- Built for £2.25 million, with 118 inpatient and an additional 28 low dependency beds.
- The hospital absorbed the Sheffield National Centre for Radiotherapy, whose in-patients were transferred to the new hospital on 13 April 1970.

1946 Contributes to Purchase of Chancet Wood.

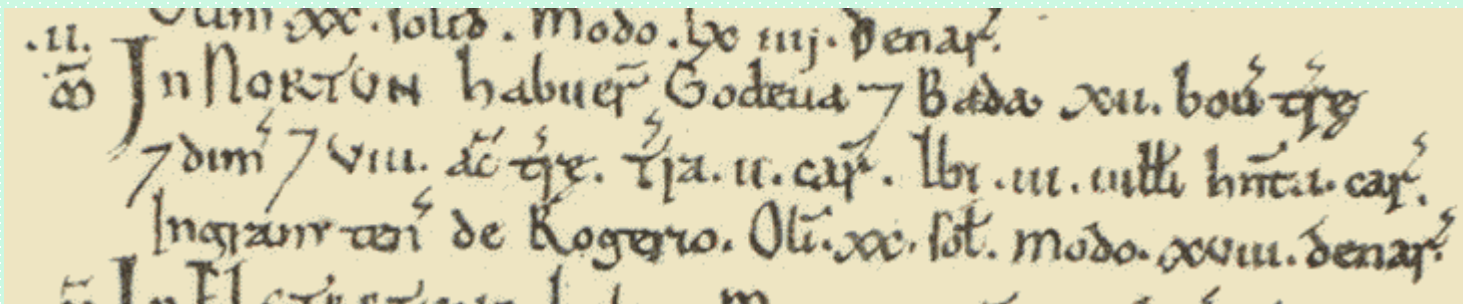
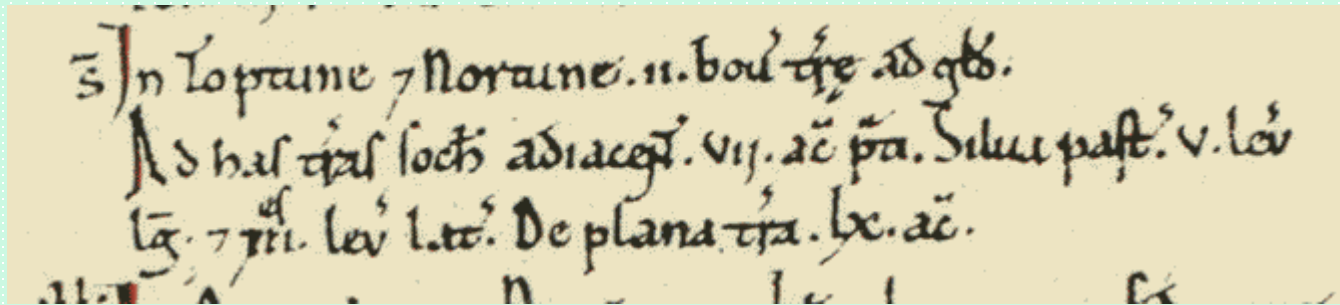
(Total of 48)

The amazing Heritage within Graves Park

When J G Graves purchased Graves Park, he was unaware of its “variety and charm”. The Friends of Graves Park’s projects, “Finding Lost Norton Park” and “Digging Deeper for All”, discovered that much of the landscape is Mediaeval, with ancient woodland, ridge and furrow, the remains of a park pale and Mediaeval fishponds. The summerhouse was thought to be a Mediaeval tower house, which might be identified on 18th century maps as such. The history, archaeology and ecology within Graves Park is rich and varied, fortunately, hopefully retained and preserved for the future by J G Graves’s amazing gift.



Before it was Graves Park, it was known as Norton Park and was the parkland for Norton Hall. Norton is recorded in the Domesday Book in 1087 and the estate is first recorded in 1002.



NORTON AND [LITTLE] NORTON

Hundred: Scarsdale

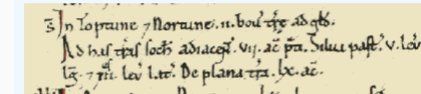
County: Derbyshire

Total population: 3 households (very small).

Total tax assessed: 1.7 geld units (quite small).

Norton and [Little] Norton appears in 2 entries in Domesday Book (show all).

ENTRY 1



[See larger image or on original page](#)

Head of manor: Newbold I.

Taxable units: Taxable value 0.3 geld units.

Other resources: Meadow 7 acres. Woodland 5 * 3 leagues.

Lord in 1066: King Edward.

Lord in 1086: King William.

Tenant-in-chief in 1086: King William.

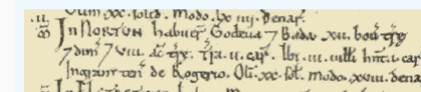
Places mentioned in this entry: Norton and [Little] Norton; [Old] Tupton.

Phillimore reference: 1,8

Waste in 1086: Implied

» Show 1 more entry

ENTRY 2



[See larger image or on original page](#)

Taxable units: Taxable value 1.6 geld units.

Value: Value to lord in 1066 £1. Value to lord in 1086 £0.1.

Households: 3 villagers.

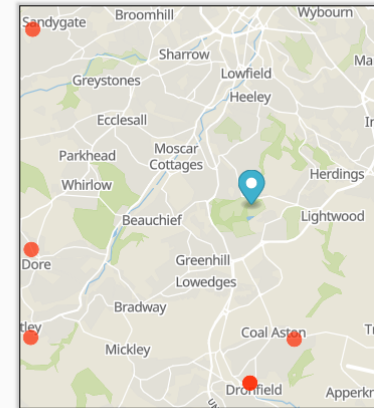
Ploughland: 2 ploughlands (land for). 1 men's plough teams.

Lords in 1066: Bada <of Norton>; Godiva <of Norton>.

Lord in 1086: Ingram <of Bilby>.

Tenant-in-chief in 1086: Roger of Bully.

Phillimore reference: 16,6



OLD HALLS OF DERBYSHIRE.

PARISH OF NORTON.

MANORIAL TENURE.

1086.....	Roger de Busli. Ingram under. Fitz-Ranulphs.	1754.....	By heiress. Samuel Shaw, of Meersbrook.
1296.....	By co-heiress. Thomas de Chaworth		By purchase. Cammell.
Edw. IV.....	By co-heiress. John Ormond.	1891.....	By purchase.
1487.....	By co-heiress. Dynham and [Babington		
	By purchase. Bullocks.		GREENHILL.
	By purchase. Eyres.		Presumedly passed with Norton.
	By purchase. Blythes. 1587, Blythes	Circa	
1624.....	By purchase. Bullocks, of Unstone.	1300.....	By gift of Sir Thomas Chaworth to Beauchief Abbey.
1666.....	By purchase. Cornelius Clarke.	Hy. VIII. ..	By bequest. Sir William West.
1696.....	By heiress. Robert Offley.	Elizabeth....	By purchase. Bullocks. Merged into Norton.

1775 Map of Norton Park



A map of the Demesne Grounds at Norton the seat of Samuel Shore Esq. 1775; Newton Shaw Collection 104, Sheffield City Library Archives.

1775 Map of the Norton Park, the seat of the Shore Family. It was under them that the landscape became less about agriculture and woodland management, and more about leisure.



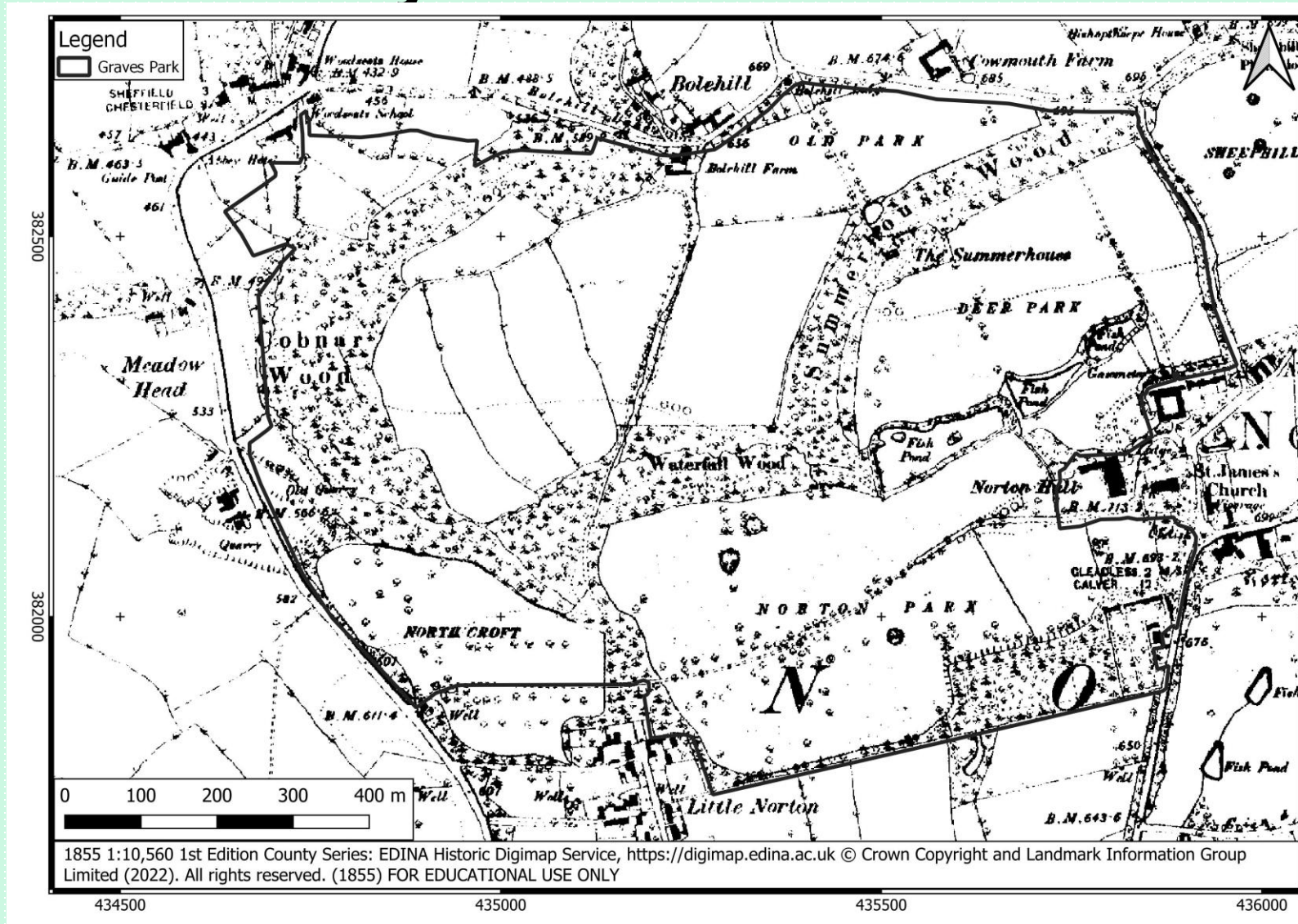
Friends of Graves Park

Charity no: 1080407



South Yorkshire Biodiversity Research Group

1855 Ordnance Survey



The 1855 Ordnance Survey is the first map in which we can view Norton Park in relation to its wider landscape. By the time of this publication, there already clear differences between the earlier 1775 Map.



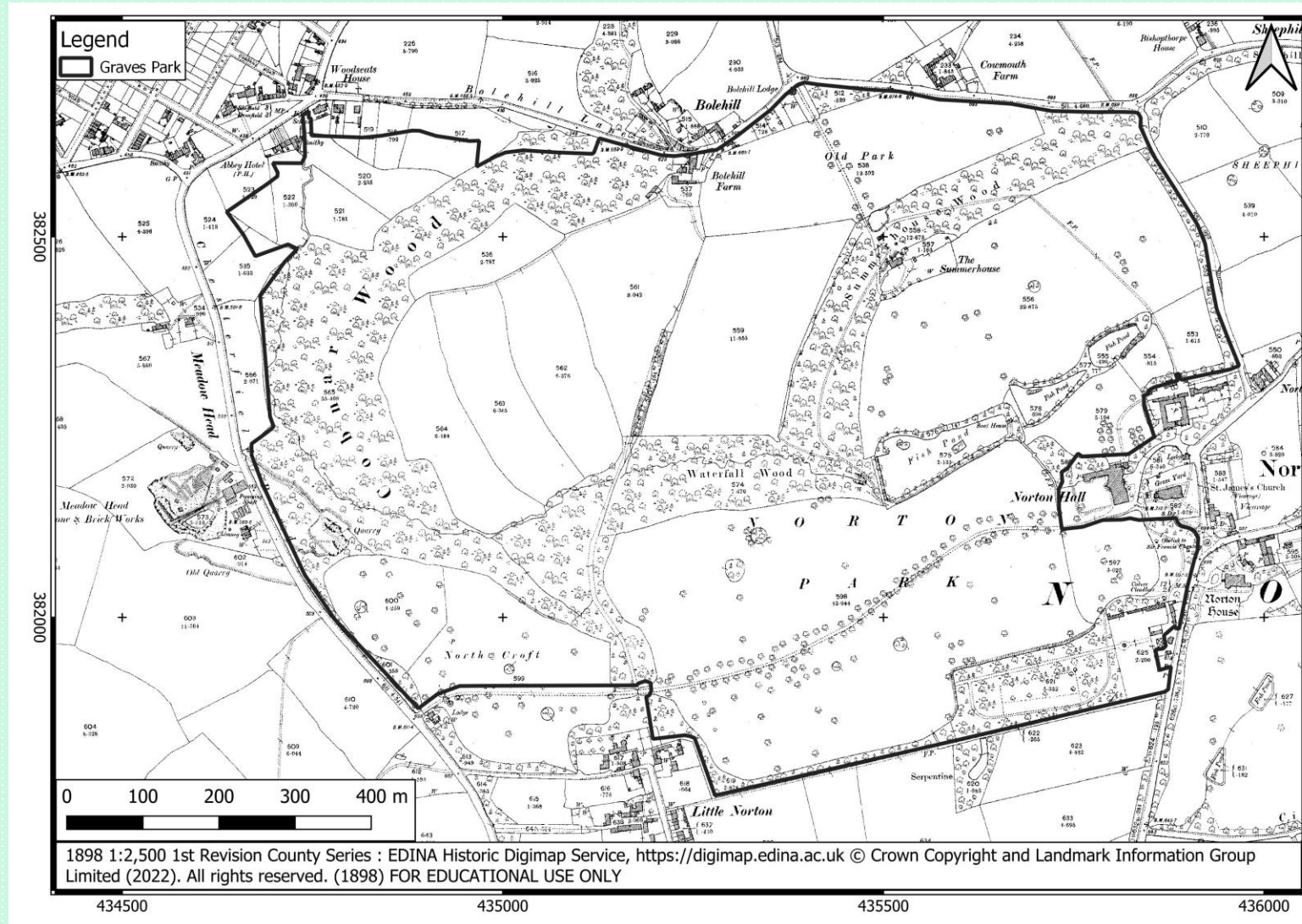
Friends of
Graves Park

Charity no: 1080407



South Yorkshire
Biodiversity Research Group

1898 Ordnance Survey



The 1898 Ordnance Survey is very similar to the 1855 map, although it does depict the gradual urban development of Woodseats in the top left hand corner.



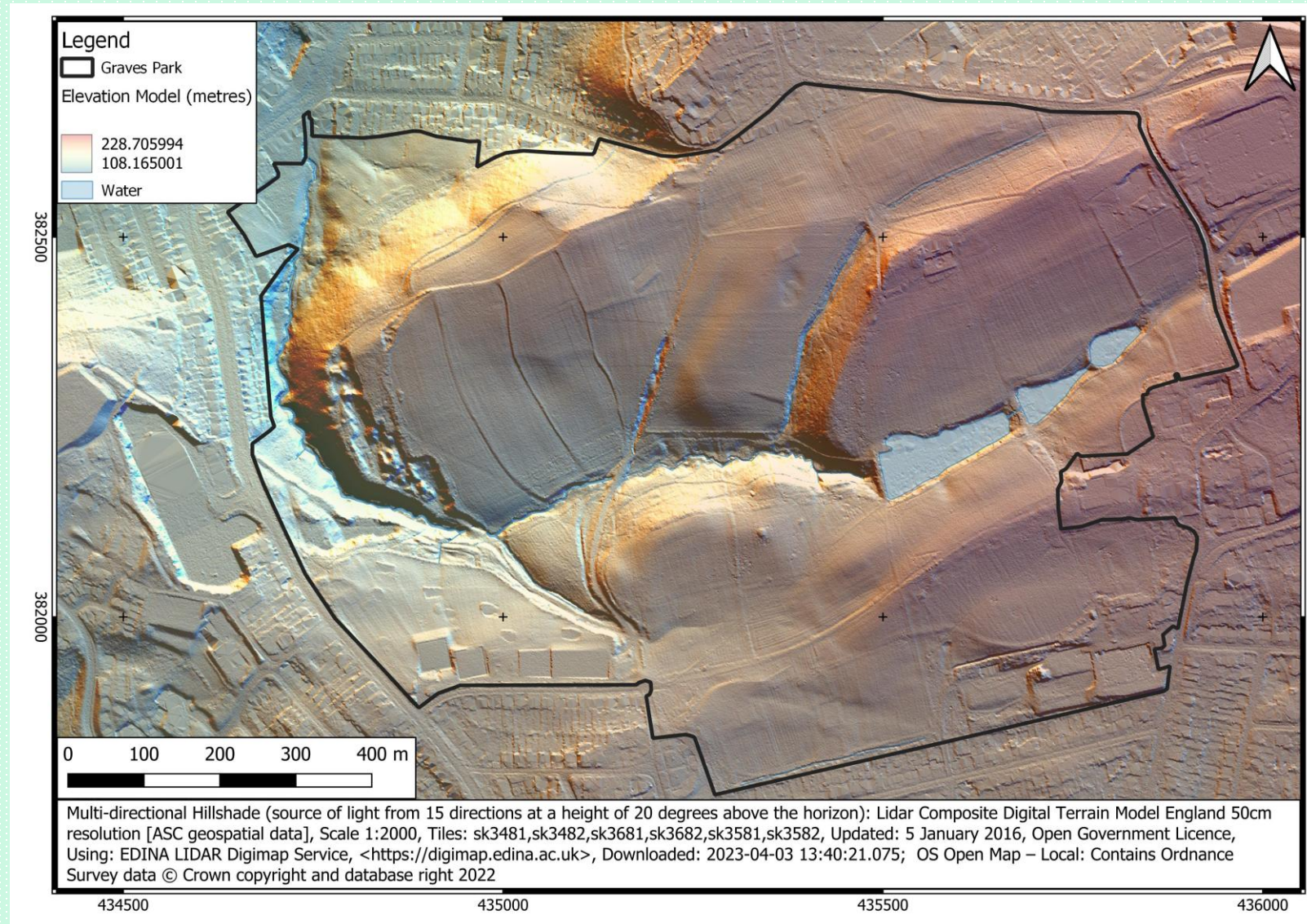
Friends of Graves Park

Charity no: 1080407



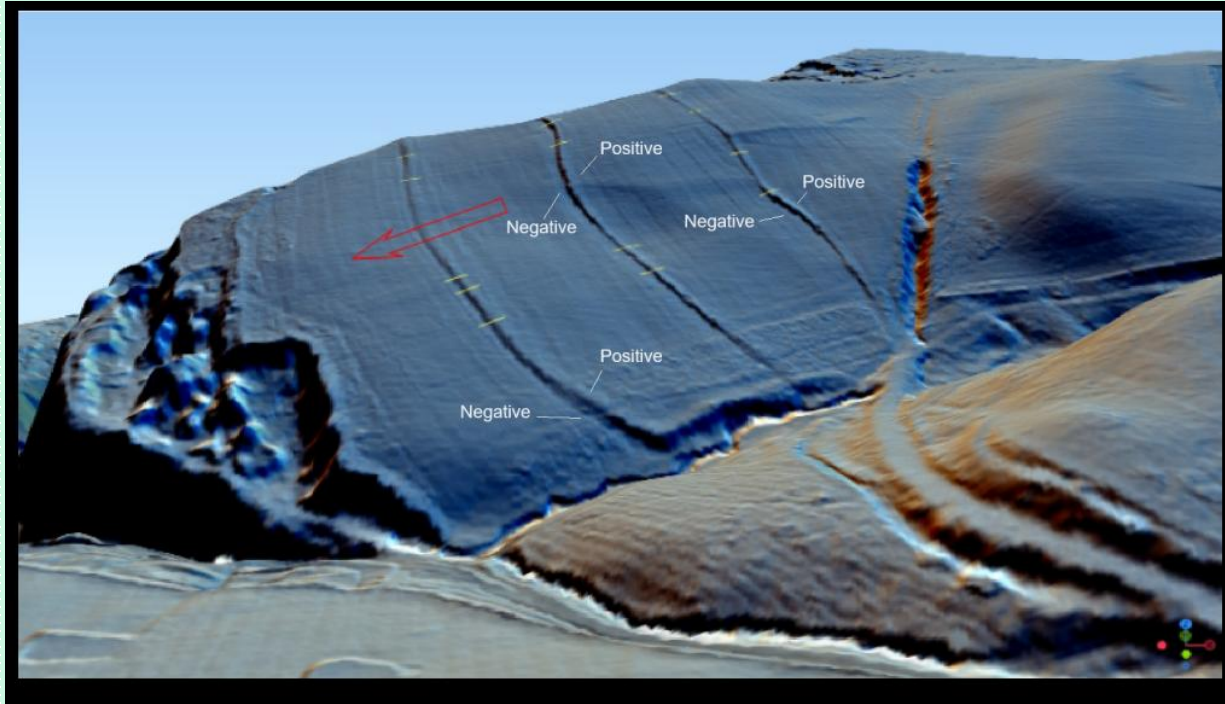
South Yorkshire Biodiversity Research Group

LiDAR



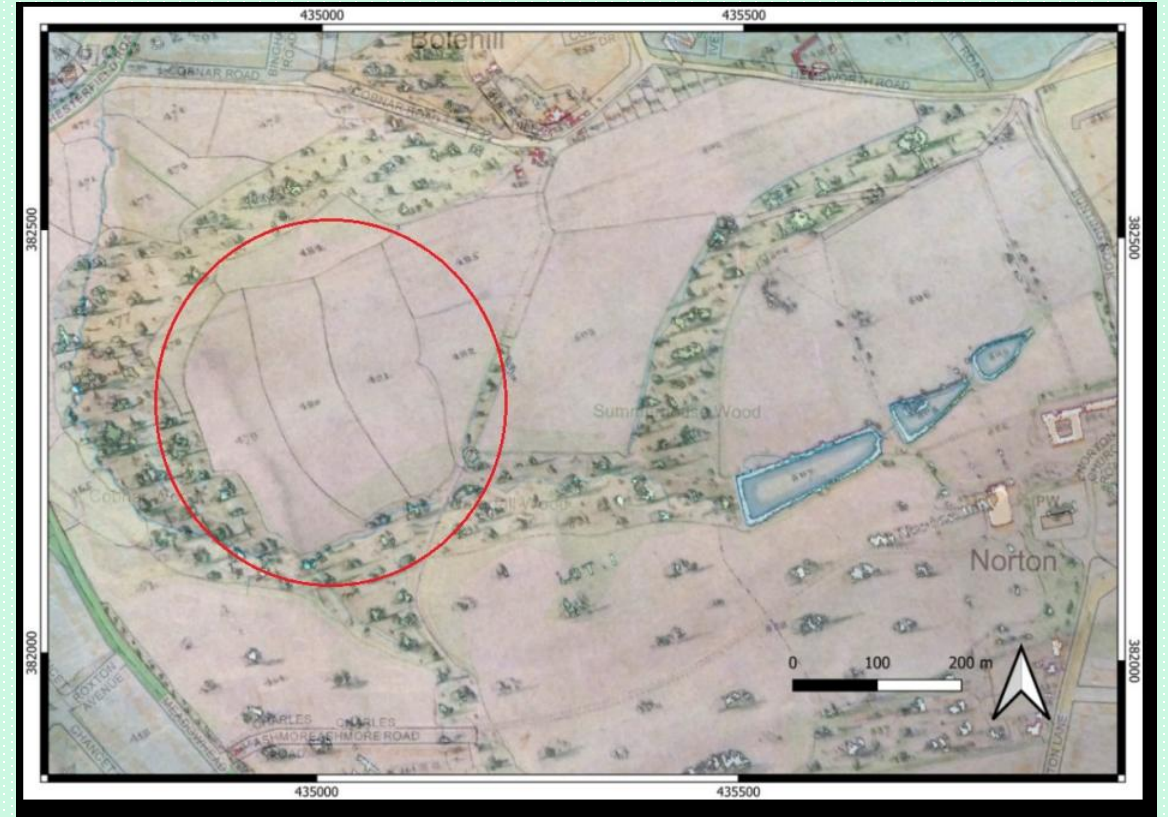
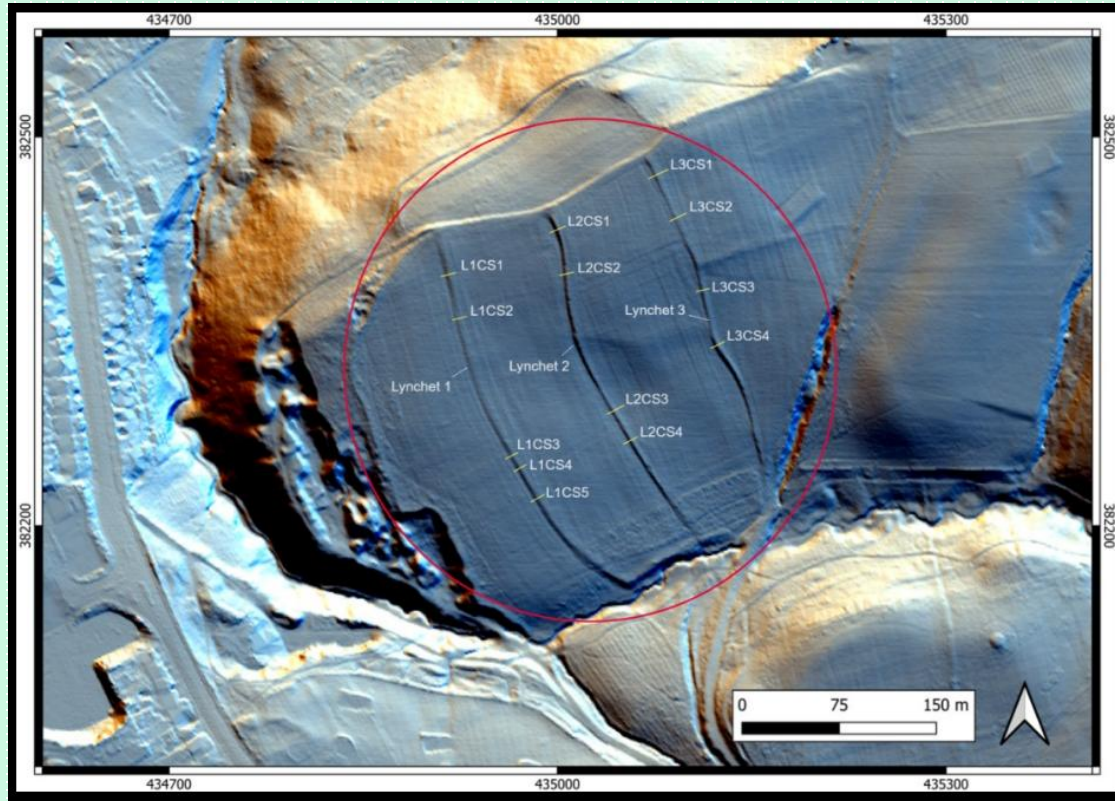
Digital Terrain Model of Graves Park represented as a multi-directional hillshade, in which the location of earthworks are highlighted by an artificial light source which serves to cast shadows against upstanding features in the landscape.

Earthworks



The western part of Graves Park contains 3 large linear earthworks interpreted as lynchets formed by ploughing following enclosure of a larger possibly mediaeval field. If so these earthworks likely began to form in the later mediaeval or post-medieval period, but may be on the alignment of mediaeval ploughing lines or strips known as selions.

Earthworks



From 1925 to 1936: The Giant Playground

1925 From the ponds to Bole Hill



1931 A playground for the children of Woodseats



1936 From Norton Nursery to Meadowhead



Coming Up in 2027...

100th Anniversary of
the Rose Garden
Café!

Join us for the
celebrations next
year!



Credits and Bibliography

“Some Memories” by Ald. J G Graves (1944)
Sheffield Archive
Picture Sheffield
South Yorkshire Biodiversity Research Group
Norton History Group
Friends of Graves Park
“The Graves Inheritance: The Story of the J G Graves
Charitable Trust 1930-1990” by Keith Farnsworth

