

# Walk and Talk

## The 'Wednesday' Walk on Thursdays



COMMUNITY  
PROGRAMME

194 – Parkwood Springs Landfill – 2.3 miles

Over the years, the landfill site at Parkwood Springs has been a blot on the landscape and well fenced off; but now it is capped off and open for exploration. This is not a long walk but it's quite hilly, especially if you go from the bottom of Vale Road up the very steep path. Mainly good underfoot, so rated at 2 – not much mud but could be wet underfoot, so bring your sticks.

Park on Parkwood Springs car park.

Counterclockwise

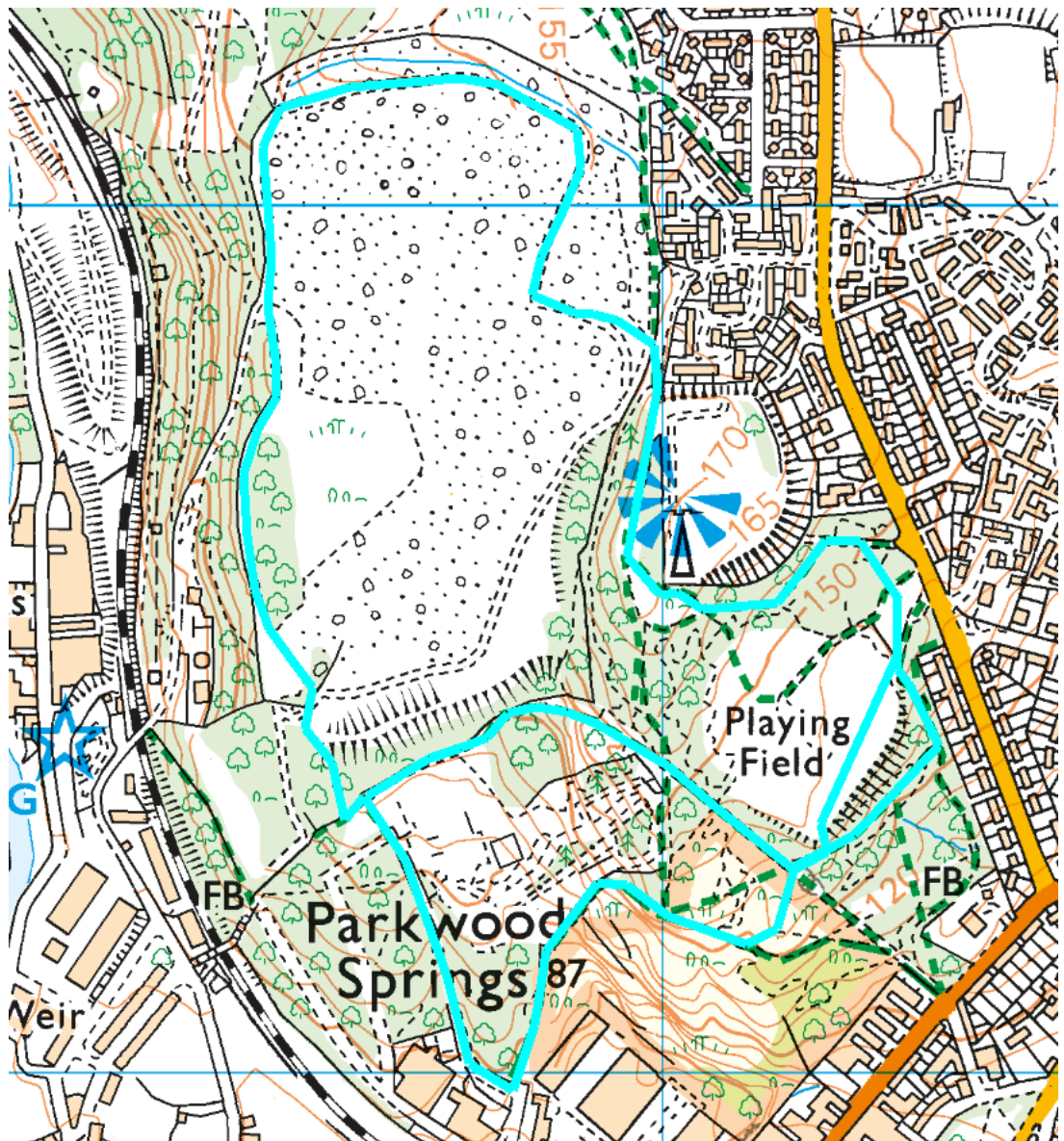
From the car park head up to the viewpoint – if you have never been here before, take any path that goes uphill!

After admiring the view, head North (towards the houses) then follow the new path downhill and through the fence onto the reclaimed landfill. The path from here is rough gravel, easy enough to follow but unexplored. Follow it as it skirts the old site, then bear left and keep going to the old streets of Parkwood Springs hamlet.

Those with an adventurous spirit may want to explore this long abandoned hamlet or the remains of the ski village, but the less

adventurous should turn left and follow the footpath up hill between the ski slopes and the landfill – it may be a bit wet in places, but it's a pleasant walk. At the top, follow any of the paths around or across the playing fields back to the car park.

The more challenging climb goes through the squeeze gate at the bottom of Vale Road and heads round the old brick works up very steeply to come out on the bridleway, then another steep climb back to the playing fields and the car park.



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## Risks

Biggest danger round here is from off-road motorbikes and downhill cyclists. Take care and do not walk up the cycle routes.

No stiles, no steps but some steep slopes up.

Footpaths are well-used but may be rough and wet in places.

Some walking across grass which may be slippery.

From 'Parkwood Springs History Trail Illustrated\_compressed.pdf'

[https://btckstorage.blob.core.windows.net/site2324/Parkwood%20Springs%20History%20Trail%20Illustrated\\_compressed.pdf](https://btckstorage.blob.core.windows.net/site2324/Parkwood%20Springs%20History%20Trail%20Illustrated_compressed.pdf)

## The Railway

Directly below runs the railway – the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway built in 1845, which cut through the lower stretches of Old Park Wood separating the woodland to the banks of the river Don from the higher parts of the hillside.

There was a railway station at Neepsend on Parkwood Road above Hillfoot Bridge. The footbridge is still usable and a mound remains where the station building stood. Currently the railway line is single track and terminates at the Stocksbridge steel works. At least one train in each direction uses the line most days. The last passengers travelled on the line in January 1970.

Parkwood Springs Village built 1840s demolished 1970s

The Sheffield Star in the 1970s reported:

'Parkwood Springs (Village) is triangular shaped, flanked by the Sheffield Manchester Railway, quarries, earthworks and a vast tipping area. Access is through steelworks via a low railway bridge.'

Looking to the right of the low railway bridge below the viewpoint, roads can be seen where there are now some new industrial buildings leading to the former ski village. The roads can be named as Wallace Road, Pickering Road, Douglas Road and Vale Road, which emerge from under the railway bridge at Bardwell Road.

There is now little to see of the once vibrant village settlement. A quarter of the houses were destroyed or damaged by wartime bombing and the area was finally cleared for redevelopment during the mid-1970s, despite co-ordinated opposition from residents. Redevelopment of the site as a whole did not happen because the steep slope of the site and poor access from the road system left it unattractive to developers. Parkwood Springs village occupied a triangle of land whose boundaries corresponded directly to the site of the old Lords Wood. There were once streets of back to back and terraced housing with a few larger houses between. There were pubs, a church, shops, fish and chip shops, a bowling green and a recreation ground. It was a close community where everyone knew each other and looked out for each other. However, it was cut off from neighbouring areas by its location and until 1971 did not even have a bus service. The isolation which once gave the community cohesion, eventually became its downfall as people felt isolated and vulnerable when others began to leave.

Parkwood Springs village was built in the mid-nineteenth century to house workers for the railway and the steel industry. 'In 1861 there were 171 houses with a population of 792. By 1901 the settlement had almost trebled in size to a population of 2,263.' Mel Jones reported that whilst the majority of steelworkers resident at Parkwood Springs originated from Sheffield, the majority of railway workers came from outside the city. (History leaflet)

By the early 1970s a survey by a group of students showed that Parkwood Springs consisted of:

- 380 houses mostly owned by private landlords.
- 100 owner occupied houses
- 40 houses owned by Sheffield Corporation
- Population around 1000.

'The majority of residents have lived in the area for at least 20 years, many all their lives.'

In 1936 George Orwell stayed at Parkwood Springs Village whilst preparing to write 'The Road to Wigan Pier'. He lodged at 152, Wallace Road with Gilbert and Kate Searle. He noted in his diary:

"Sheffield seems to me, by daylight, one of the most appalling places I have ever seen. In whichever direction you look you see the same landscape of monstrous chimneys pouring forth smoke which is sometimes black and sometimes of a rosy tint said to be due to sulphur. You can smell the sulphur in the air all the while. Even the shallow river that runs through the town is usually bright yellow with some chemical or other."

At night from the hillside above the Don, he saw "lamps twinkling like stars. Huge jets of flame shoot periodically out of the roofs of foundries (many working the night shift at present) and show a splendid rosy colour through the smoke and steam. Then Sheffield assumes a kind of sinister magnificence."

Despite the place, Orwell wrote of the people: "I was quite sorry to leave the Searles. I have seldom met people with more natural decency."

Former residents have contributed their memories of living in the village:

### When people lived on Parkwood – Memories of Parkwood Springs

'Being born and bred in Hillsborough, our parents used to take us for walks and to picnic over the white bridge onto Parkwood Springs. We could see Wardsend Cemetery from the top of the white bridge. One post of the white bridge is still standing.

'My uncle, who was in the Home Guard during the war used to man the anti-aircraft guns at the top of the hill. Our windows would rattle when the guns were fired. The anti aircraft gun mountings are still there beside the viewpoint at the top of the hill. If you look near to and under the bushes you can see the concrete base.

The terraced houses on Wallace Road were for Railway workers who probably worked at Victoria Station, Parkwood Station or the engine sheds at Bridgehouses. The window tapper used to come round with a long rod and string with a weight on it to tap on railwaymen's bedroom windows and wake them up for duty.

There were two long blocks of back to back houses, mostly terraced houses with small shared gardens at the back and then a few bigger houses like the gas manager's house and the vicarage in Pickering Road. The gas lamplighter used to come round the streets with a hooked stick to turn the gas lamps on.

The sulphur from the Electricity Power Station used to smell unpleasant, rot the curtains and kill the privet hedges. As children we used to climb the massive spoil heaps of black ash at the Power Station, jump into the empty buckets going up the hillside and jump off at the next heap.

In winter we sledged down the steep streets and down the clay heap between the brickyard and Douglas Road. We collected clay and made small hollow boxes that we baked in the kitchen range. The steel workers at the Hallamshire steelworks gave us 'oily wop' to burn in our 'winter warmers' to keep our hands warm.

Carts came round the streets selling milk, fish and all sorts – even pikelets and oatcakes. The milk man was a local farmer who brought milk in churns with a horse and cart. Once the cart came loose and ran off down the street it was so steep.

At the top of Little Vale Road was a recreation ground with 6 swings. There was rough clay ground covered in black ash where we played football and at the top of Douglas Road next to the allotments was our bowling green with a conservatory. Above this were huts with livestock – pigeons, goats and a donkey.

At the bottom of the hill to get to Hillfoot you had to go down 100 steps, a cobbled gennal and through a dark tunnel.