

Hallamshire

a note on its meaning and the
extent of the territory it
represents

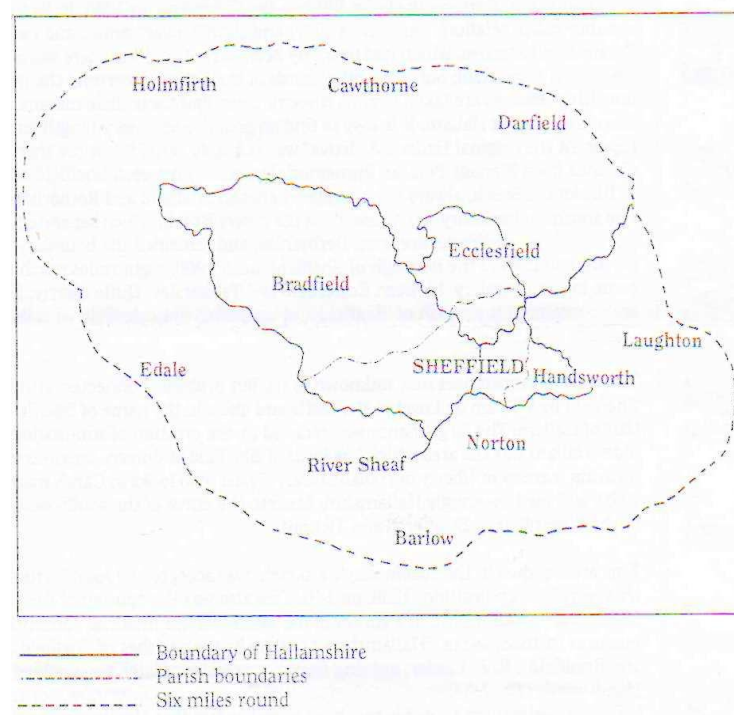


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(Original by Mary Walton, 1954)

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The "shire-within-a-shire" is fairly common in the north of England. The central authority found it difficult to keep up-to-date with the collection of taxes and the administration of justice in places where wide stretches of mountain, moorland and forest separated the inhabited districts from one another, and tended to delegate such duties to semi-independent deputies in defined areas. Such a little "shire" existed in the south-western corner of Yorkshire. Both its name and the extent of its boundaries have been matters of dispute among historians; but some facts are reasonably clear.

The first surviving record of the names of Hallam and Sheffield occur in Domesday Book, the great taxation survey made for William the Conqueror in 1086. In this area there was a manor called "Hallun" ten "leuvas" long and eight "leuvas" broad, and two little manors, Escafeld and Ateclive, which had formerly been part of Hallun. There were also six little manors in Ecclesfield; but if the plain words of the entry concerning the length and breadth of Hallam are taken simply, it seems clear that these little manors must also have been taken out of Hallam. It is easy to find an area the necessary length and breadth to represent the original Hallam. A "leuva" was probably very little more than a mile; the distance from Stanage Pole, an immemorial boundary between Sheffield and Hathersage, to Blackburn Brook, always the boundary between



Sheffield and Rotherham, is ten miles. The southern boundary must have been the Meers Brook, which separated Mercia from Northumbria, and Yorkshire from Derbyshire, and remained the boundary first of the parish, and then of the Borough of Sheffield, until 1900; eight miles north from there we come to the boundary between Ecclesfield and Tankersley. Quite clearly,

Hallam was the area containing the parish of Sheffield and the parish of Ecclesfield with its huge chapelry of Bradfield.

Through circumstances now unknown to us, but probably connected with the building at Sheffield by William de Lovetot of a castle and church, the name of Sheffield replaced that of Hallam. The large manor was reduced by the creation of sub-manors; but the older Hallam was the area which the lords of Sheffield at different periods claimed as the lordship, barony or liberty of Hallamshire. Anyone who looks at Cary's map of Yorkshire, 1810, will see how snugly Hallamshire fits into the curve of the south-western boundary of the Wapentake of Strafforth and Tickhill.

This area, shown in the above sketch, was accepted by Joseph Hunter (*Hallamshire*, 2nd edition, 1869, pp.1-3). This also was the opinion of the Earl of Shrewsbury's bailiff, who in a survey of the estates whose financial administration was his business in 1638, wrote, "Hallamshire I take to be the parishes of Sheffield, Ecclesfield and Bradfield". R. E. Leader, arguing from the practice of later years, added the parish of Handsworth (*The History of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire*, vol 1, 1905, pp 2-3); this is a development probably resulting from the fact that Handsworth, originally under a different lord, became the property of the Lords of Sheffield. Naturally, it came to be considered part of their "liberty", especially after the rise of the cutlery trades, for the administration of the cutlers' affairs was carried out in the courts of the lord of the manor long before the incorporation of the Company; and there were many cutlers in Handsworth.

By the seventeenth century, of course, the concept of Hallamshire as an administrative area was growing shadowy, and the governmental duties of the feudal barons had been transferred to other officers. Nevertheless, the geographical boundary was still clear in men's minds, and it was natural that the cutlers, so much of whose work was carried on in the hamlets up the five rivers, should think of themselves as a Hallamshire body. In 1614 the scythe and sickle manufacturers of north Derbyshire had put themselves under the authority of the cutlers' jury at Sheffield; and in order to keep the community together, the Act by which the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire was incorporated in 1624 specified that its authority should extend throughout Hallamshire and six miles round it. In their conception of Hallamshire the cutlers definitely include Handsworth, and in this sense the ancient little shire still exists.

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