

**HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT  
OF BREEDON HILL**

**DRAFT  
JULY 2024**

## 1. Context

- 1.1. Breedon on the Hill (henceforth 'Breedon') is a parish in NW Leicestershire district. Breedon is about 12 miles south of Derby and about 18 miles SE of Nottingham.
- 1.2. Breedon Hill is an outcrop of the Cloud Hill and Milldale dolostone formations. The Milldale formation is quarried for aggregate. The hill plateau is at about 125m AOD. Melbourne Lane descends from about 85m AOD at Windmill Cottage to about 75m AOD at the Holly Bush PH.
- 1.3. The amended NW Leicestershire Local Plan (NWLDC, 2021) recognises Breedon Hill as an area of countryside, i.e. land that does not form part of a settlement hierarchy. Policy S3 *Countryside* specifies forms of development that may be supported in the countryside.

## 2. Sources

- 2.1. Section 5 contains a bibliography. In addition, the following sources have been consulted:
  - The Leicestershire & Rutland Historic Environment Record (references to entries on the HER are prefixed with the letters MLE).
  - The enclosure award map (1759) held at Leicestershire Record Office (DG20/Ma/46).
  - Trade directories of 1846, 1863, 1881, 1888, 1891 and 1899.
  - The OS 1:2500 maps of 1882, 1901 and 1922.
  - Vertical aerial photographs taken in 1948.
  - Castle Donington Rural District Council's planning registers, 1948 to 1974.

## 3. Manorial and administrative history

- 3.1. In 1641 the manor belonged to Henry Grey, first Earl of Stamford (Taylor, 1906). In 1873 George Grey, seventh Earl of Stamford, "put his Breedon property up for sale by auction" (HMDH, 2002). It was bought by Charles Abney-Hastings (d.1895), first Lord Donington.
- 3.2. The Earl of Stamford had "let the lime works from year to year to the Bostock family". Lord Donington let the quarries to Fielding Moore, who worked the quarries for three years "and then went bankrupt"<sup>1</sup>. Lord Donington "decided to run the quarries himself"; he engaged John Stableford of Coalville, who managed the quarries in the 1880s "with ever decreasing success" (HMDH, 2002)<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.3. Lord Donington asked his agent, John Gillies Shields, to "take control of the quarries". In 1896 the quarries were leased to Mr Shields for thirty years. In 1920 Mr Shields "was able to purchase the quarries and other land in the parish outright". In 1933 the quarries "were turned into a limited company [in which] the Shields family retained a certain number of shares" (Taylor, 1906; HMDH, 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> White's Directory (1863) lists John Bostock of Breedon Lodge, a lime merchant and farmer. Kelly's Directory (1881) lists Fielding Moore, a lime burner. HMDH (2002) refers erroneously to Mr Fieldingmore.

<sup>2</sup> HMDH (2002) says that John Stableford was the manager of the lime works from 1880 to 1886. Trade directories indicate that he was not the manager in 1881, but he was the manager in 1888.

- 3.4. Breedon was administered from 1894 to 1974 by the Castle Donington Rural District Council. It has been administered since that date by NW Leicestershire District Council.

#### **4. Historic development**

##### **The hill fort**

- 4.1. A hill fort was laid out at Breedon Hill in the Iron Age (MLE4399), although “earlier occupation debris” indicates that the hill had been occupied before that date<sup>3</sup>. In 2016 geophysical survey identified “at least twenty Iron Age round houses south of the church” (MLE23231). Occupation probably continued into the Roman period; “a few Roman sherds” were excavated in 1946.

##### **Ecclesiastical development**

- 4.2. In the late seventh century a minster was founded within the former hill fort. No traces of the buildings survive but the interior of the existing church incorporates “one of the most important groups of Anglo-Saxon carved stone in Britain” (MLE4403). A cemetery was laid out to the east of the minster.
- 4.3. In the early twelfth century a priory was founded on the site of the minster; “of this something has survived in the tower” (Pevsner, 1984). The priory church contained a parochial nave and a monastic choir; the latter was erected in the thirteenth century. Monastic buildings were laid out to the north of the priory church<sup>4</sup>.
- 4.4. The priory was dissolved in 1539; at this date the parochial nave was “in a ruined state”. The priory church was purchased by Francis Shirley “as a burial place for himself and his successors”<sup>5</sup> but on petition “it was granted to the inhabitants of Breedon for their use” (Taylor, 1906). In 1804 the parochial nave was “still partly standing” but by 1906 there was “no trace” (Nichols, 1804; Taylor, 1906).
- 4.5. The 1759 map indicates the extent of the church yard [1]. The church yard was extended before 1882 [2]. It was extended by one acre c.1901-1903, “the land being bought and given by Sir Matthew Joyce” [3]. The extension was consecrated in October 1903 (Taylor, 1906). The church yard was extended again between 1948 and 1963 [15].

##### **Other development**

- 4.6. The 1759 map indicates the parish church and the ‘Holy Croft’, three other crofts or closes and an area called the ‘market stead’. In the late twelfth century a “confirmation of a grant” had mentioned “a market and three messuages on the hill” (Nichols, 1804).

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<sup>3</sup> MLE4398 refers to Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age finds at Breedon Hill.

<sup>4</sup> In 1975 “excavations on the north side of the church yard revealed monastic buildings”. The cloister seems to have been to the north of the church; “a roof scar on the north wall of the tower” suggests “the position of a [monastic] building, probably the dormitory” (MLE4403).

<sup>5</sup> Hence the church contains “the magnificent Shirley pew” and “an equally lavish Shirley tomb”. Jenkins (1999) *England’s thousand best churches*.

- 4.7. The 1759 map indicates a cherry orchard on the east side of Melbourne Lane [4]. The map indicates a house to the north of Breedon Hall; it had been demolished by 1882 [5]. George Grey, sixth Earl of Stamford, erected a school c.1832-34 on the 'Coney Close' [6].
- 4.8. The 1759 map indicates houses on Main Street [7]. Charles Abney-Hastings erected a school for girls here c.1874-77. The school on the 'Coney Close' became a school for boys.

### **The quarry**

- 4.9. In 1770 Nathaniel Curzon and Lord Stamford exchanged correspondence regarding the "lime works at Breedon"<sup>6</sup>. Nichols (1804) refers to quarries "thirty or forty feet high" and "six or seven kilns ... each built at the foot of its respective quarry". The 1882 OS map indicates an 'old quarry' [8] and the first phase of the present quarry [9].
- 4.10. Quarrying activity ceased c.1890<sup>7</sup>. In 1896 the quarry was leased to John Gillies Shields, who erected "a new modern kiln" c.1901-06 (Taylor, 1906). Ordnance Survey maps indicate the extension of the quarry between 1901 and 1922 [10].
- 4.11. In 1946 excavations on the Barley Close "in advance of destruction by quarrying" revealed the Anglo-Saxon cemetery (MLE4402). By 1948 the quarry had consumed the whole of the Barley Close [11]. By 1963 it had consumed the 'market stead' and the 'old quarry' [12].
- 4.12. At NGR 44069 32357, Platchett's House "disappeared" in 1967 (HMDH, 2002)<sup>8</sup>. Planning permission was granted for the "extension of the extraction area" in 1969 and 1973<sup>9</sup>. Map 2 indicates the extent of the extraction area in 2024 [13 and 14].
- 4.13. In 2003 the County Council granted permission for a "new highway and quarry access", a substantial "eastern extension" to the quarry and "landscaping and restoration" works including works "to recreate the southern part of Breedon Hill" (2003/0701/07).

## **5. Bibliography**

– (2002) *Hand-me-down hearsays of the parish of Breedon*

Nichols (1804) *The history and antiquities of the county of Leicester: West Goscote Hundred*

NW Leicestershire District Council (2021) *NW Leicestershire Local Plan*

Pevsner (1984) *Buildings of England: Leicestershire and Rutland*

Stevens H (1821) *Ordnance Survey drawing: Hartshorn*

Taylor (1906) *History of Breedon on the Hill: Church and village*

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<sup>6</sup> Leicestershire Record Office, DE1536/125 to DE1536/128.

<sup>7</sup> In 1888 John William Stableford was manager at the lime works. There are no corresponding entries in trade directories of 1891 and 1899. Hence the extent of the quarry on the 1901 OS map is similar to the extent of the quarry on the 1882 OS map.

<sup>8</sup> The house was erected at some time between 1759 and 1882. "On the front wall was a plaque saying, 'rebuilt in 1770'" (HMDH, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> CDRDC reference 2/69: "Extensions to quarry". CDRDC reference 336/73: "Proposed extension of stone quarry and creation of landscaped spoil mounds".