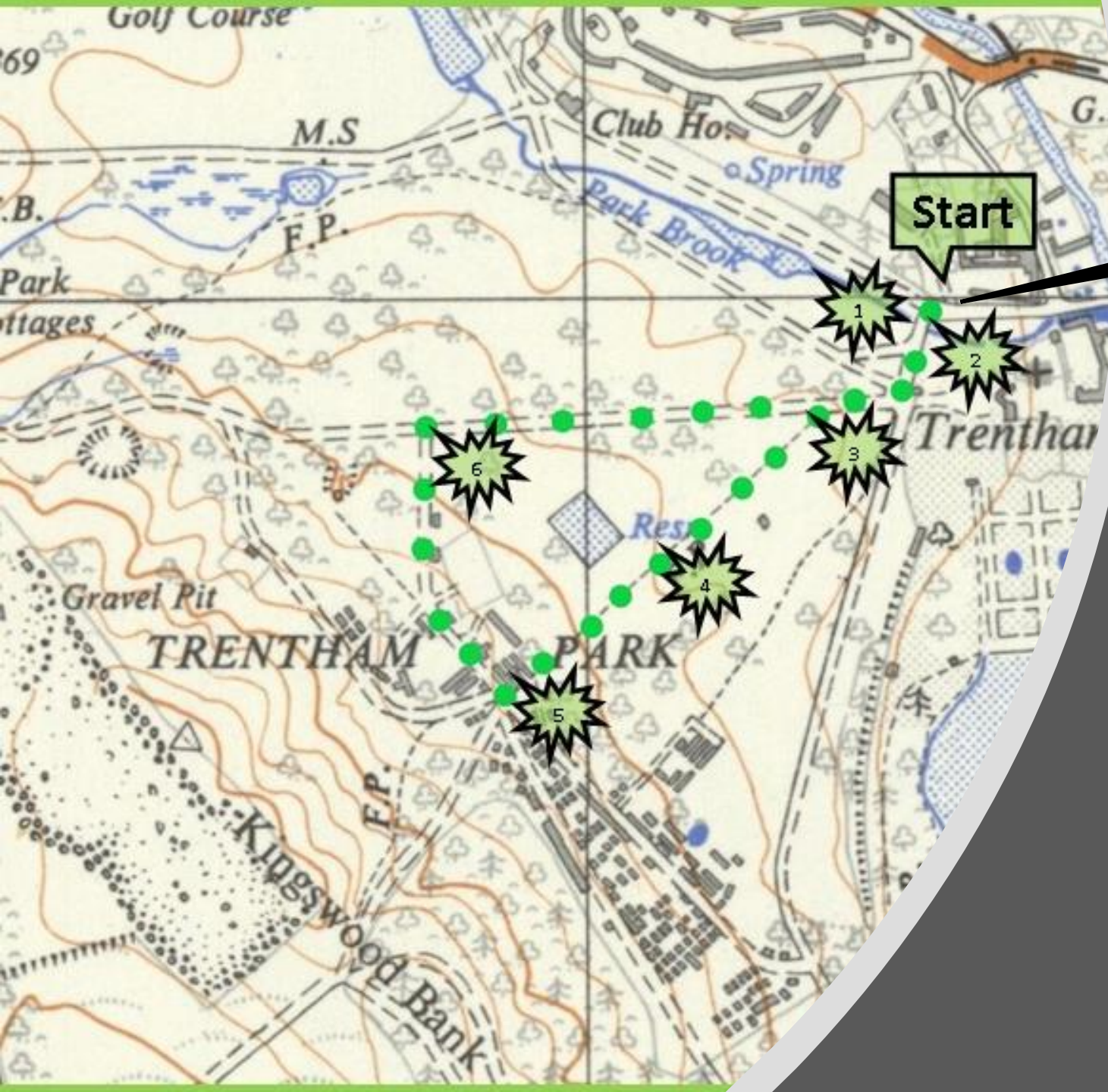


A Virtual Walk in the Park

With Alan Myatt

The Route

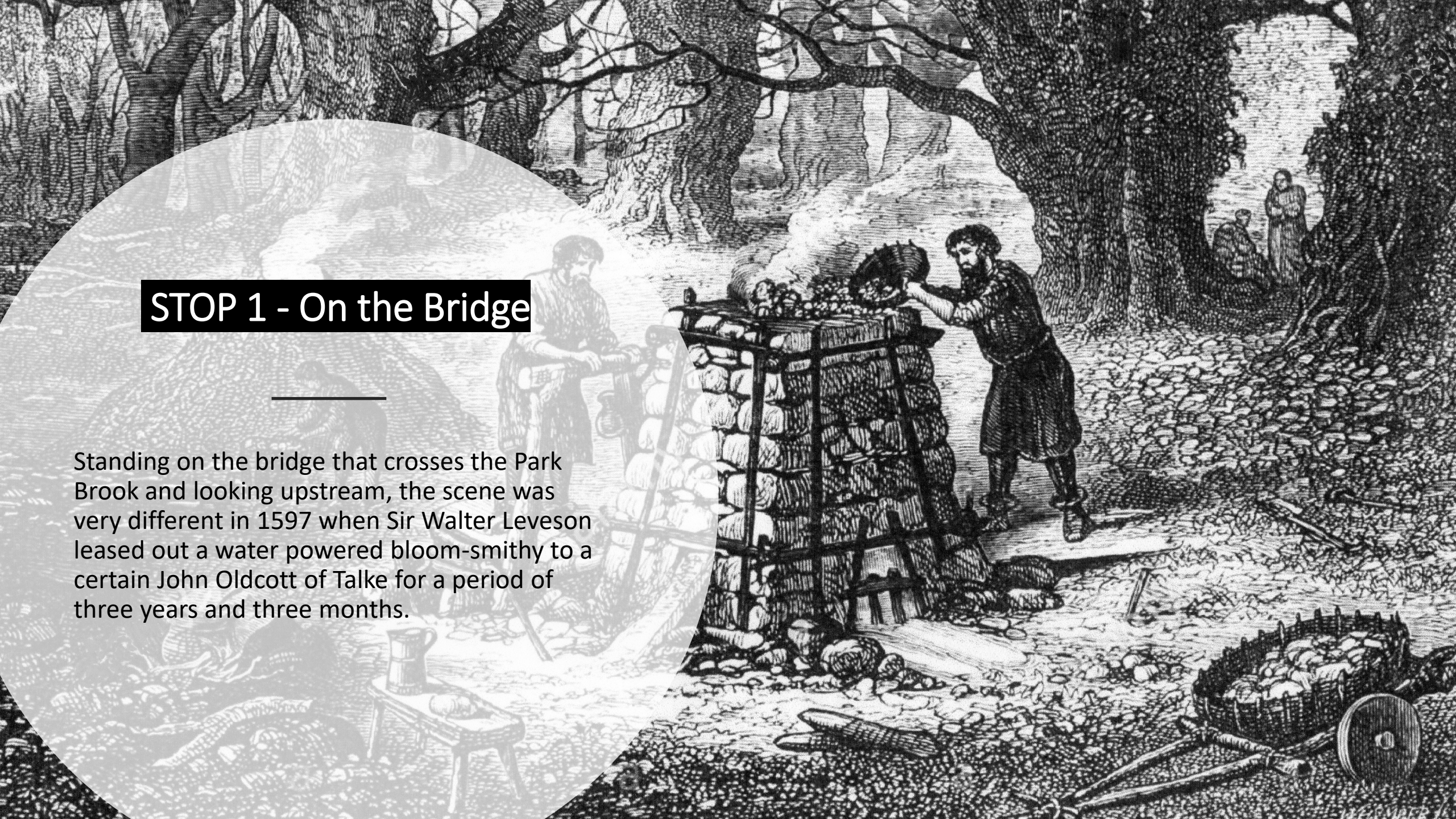


The route starts at the bridge on Park Drive, Trentham ST4 8AE

This walk aims to show the many uses this relatively small area of parkland has seen over previous centuries. Some traces have disappeared, but others remain today, if you know where to look!

STOP 1 - On the Bridge

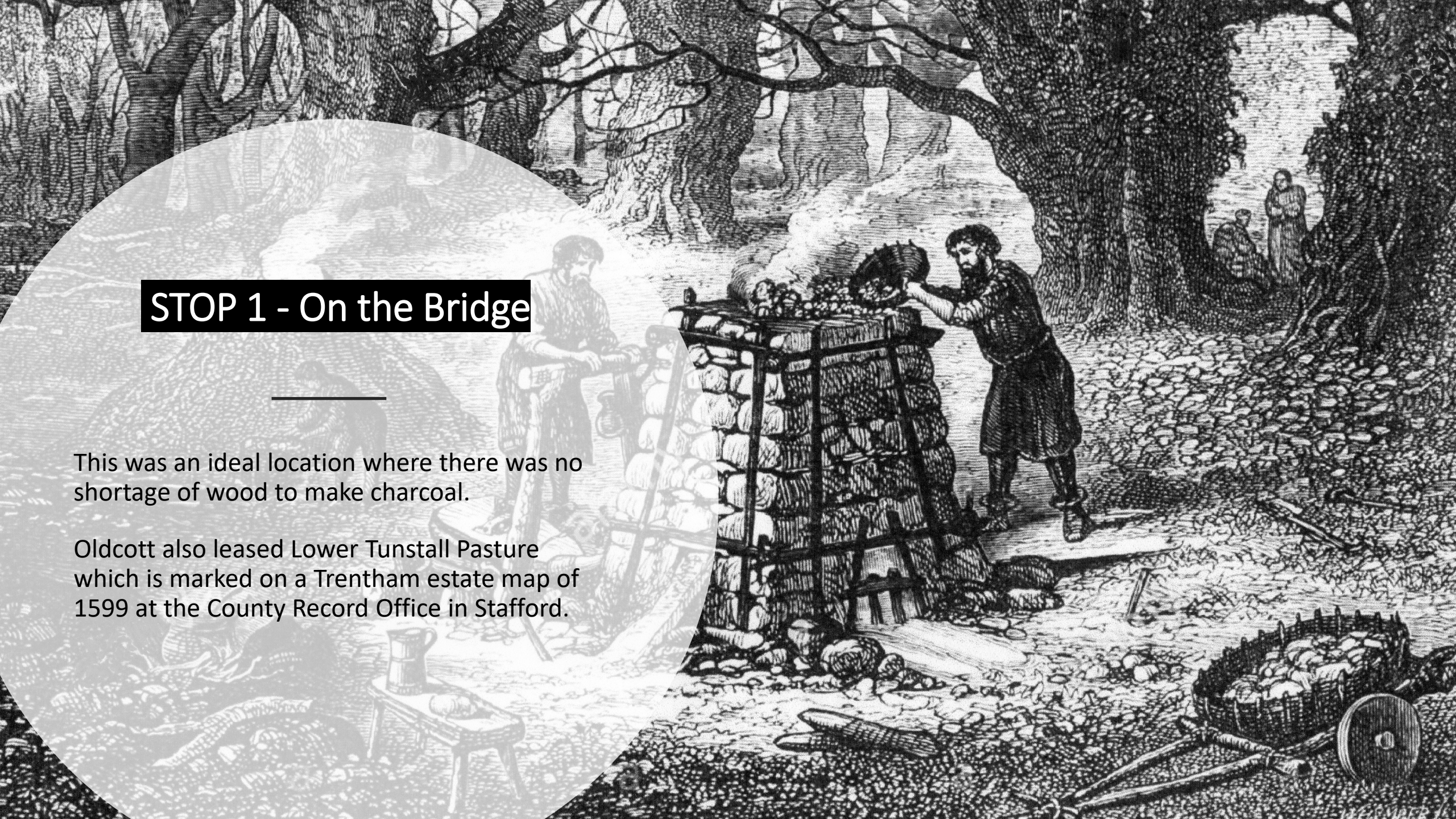
Standing on the bridge that crosses the Park Brook and looking upstream, the scene was very different in 1597 when Sir Walter Leveson leased out a water powered bloom-smithy to a certain John Oldcott of Talke for a period of three years and three months.



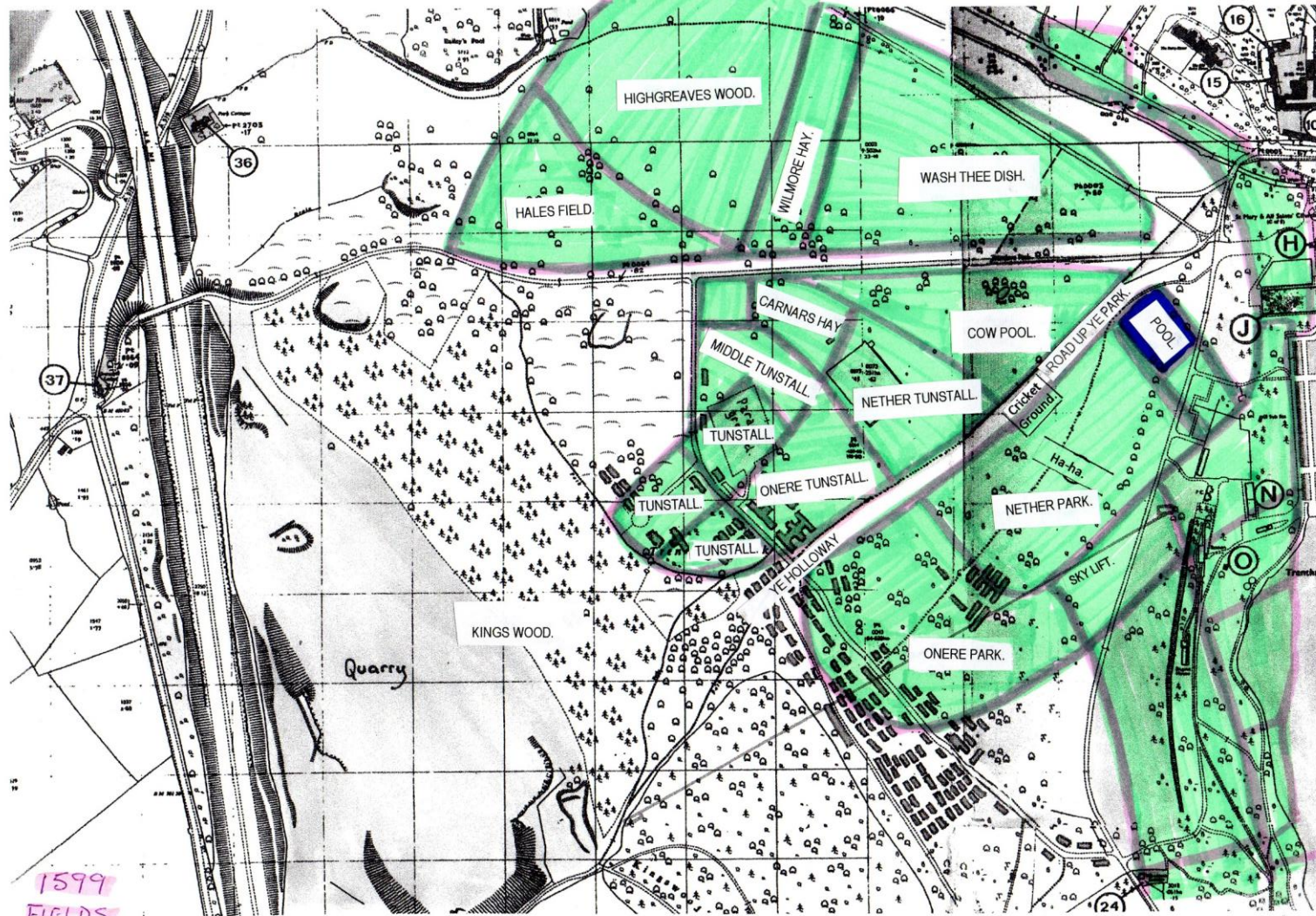
STOP 1 - On the Bridge

This was an ideal location where there was no shortage of wood to make charcoal.

Oldcott also leased Lower Tunstall Pasture which is marked on a Trentham estate map of 1599 at the County Record Office in Stafford.



STOP 1 - Trentham estate map of 1599 with field names



Tunstall is a combination of two old English words from the 7th century. TUN denotes a farm, and STAELL denotes a settlement.

Nether Tunstall Pasture was the area where the square reservoir was later constructed.

Twelve fields were enclosed by Lord Gower in 1720 to extend his park. This required the public footpath to 'Ye Holloway' to be abandoned for a path further north.

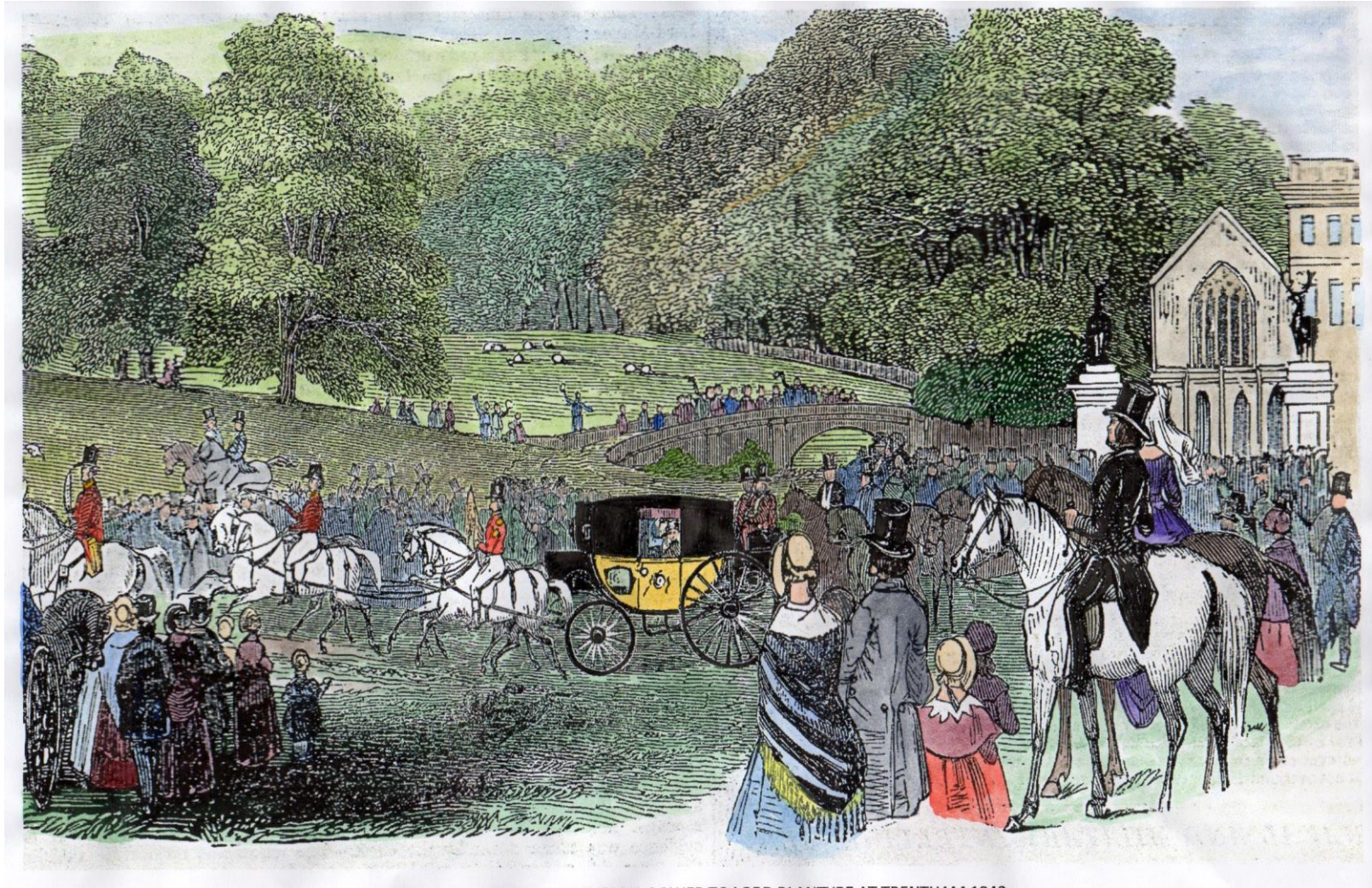
The carriage drive built to Gravel Pit Lodge (built 1859) ran through a field marked 'Wash Thee Dish' on the 1599 map. The west side of the drive was named 'Cow Pool'.

STOP 1 - The Bridge

The bridge itself was built in 1767 to cross a double Ha-ha which separated the gardens from the park. It was moved to its present position over Park Brook at the completion of the new hall sometime after 1843.

The bridge with two lanterns spoiled Capability Brown's vision of his open landscape from the hall, so it was used to replace the old bridge, probably constructed by Francis Smith of Warwick when he re-modelled the hall in 1737.

The Ha-ha was moved back 80 feet in the 1840s.

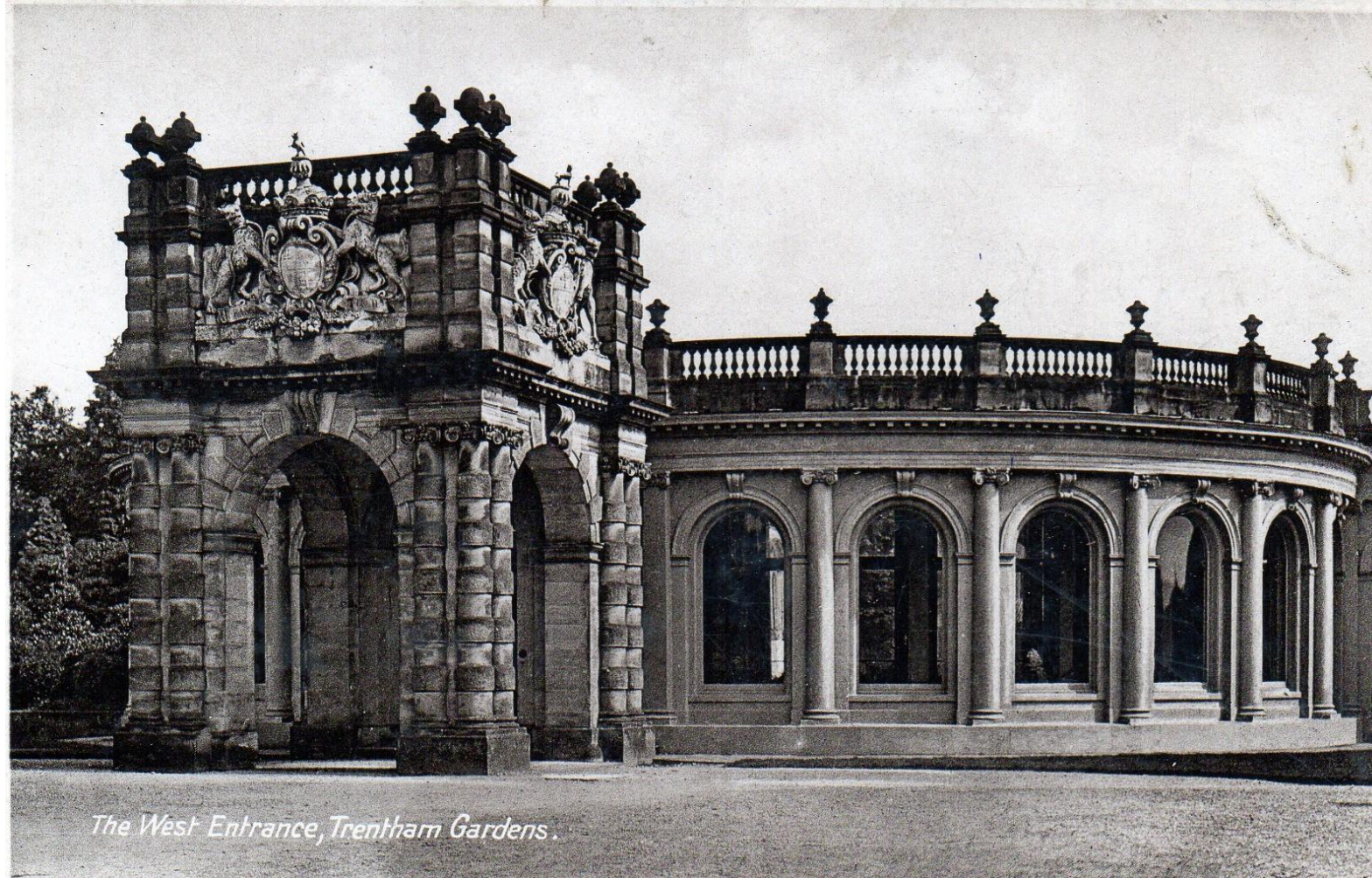


This engraving of 1843 shows the old bridge over Park Brook. The Duke's carriage is conveying Lady Evelyn Leveson-Gower with her new husband Lord Blantyre, to Lilleshall after their marriage at Trentham.

STOP 2 - The West Entrance to Trentham Hall

After crossing the bridge a gap in the trees reveals a view of the grand west entrance to Trentham Hall, with its porte-cochère. This was left in situ when the hall was demolished, probably because it was too massive to be sold, unlike the rest of the hall which was brick rendered to imitate stone.

The crescent shaped corridors, now in ruins, led to the grand staircase and guest bedrooms to the left, while the right corridor led to the conservatory, libraries and private wing used by the Duke and Duchess. Standing on the gravel forecourt, in front of the porte-cochère, was a bronze figure of Diana at the Chase holding a bow and arrow.



The West Entrance, Trentham Gardens.

STOP 3 - The Cricket Ground

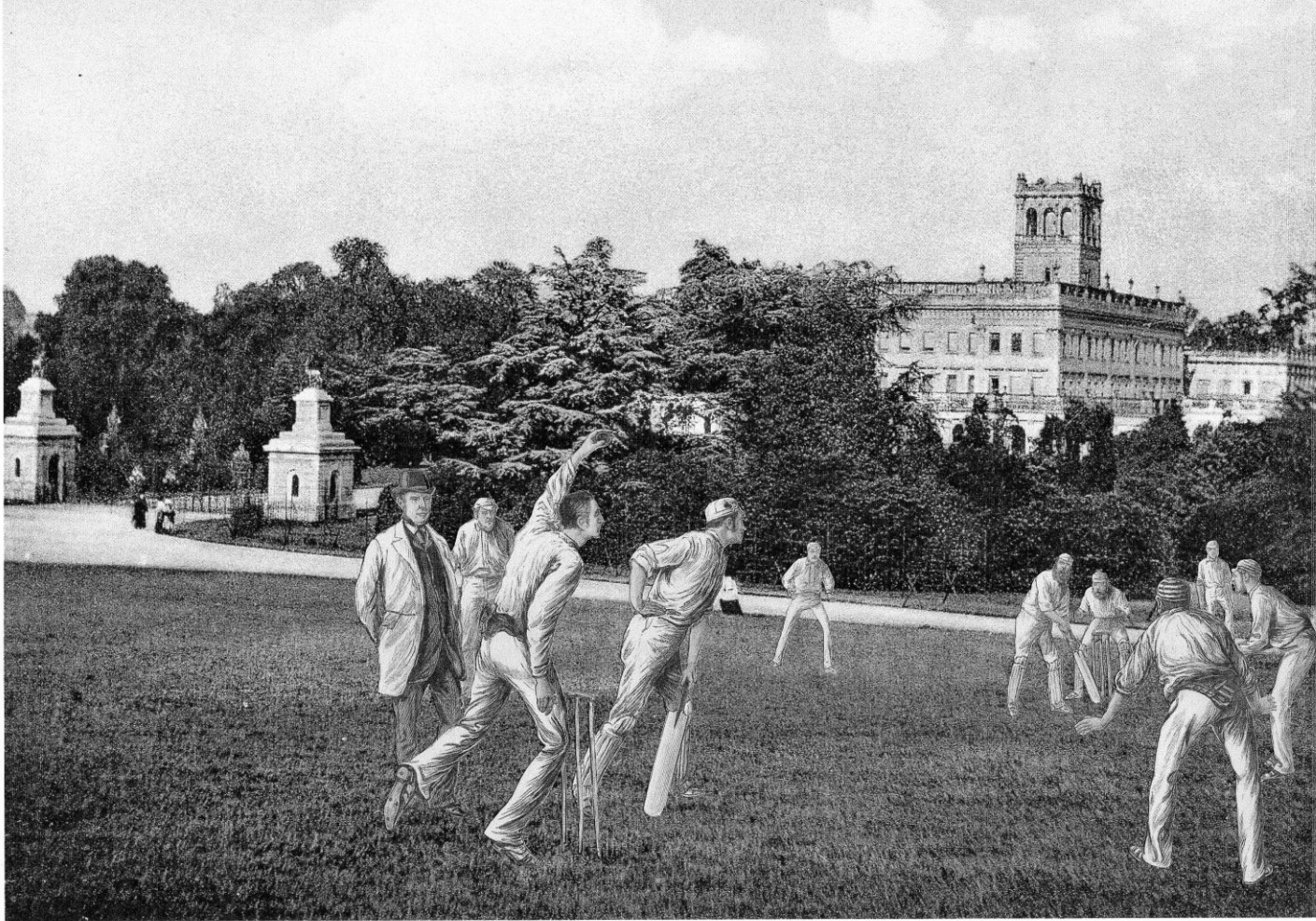


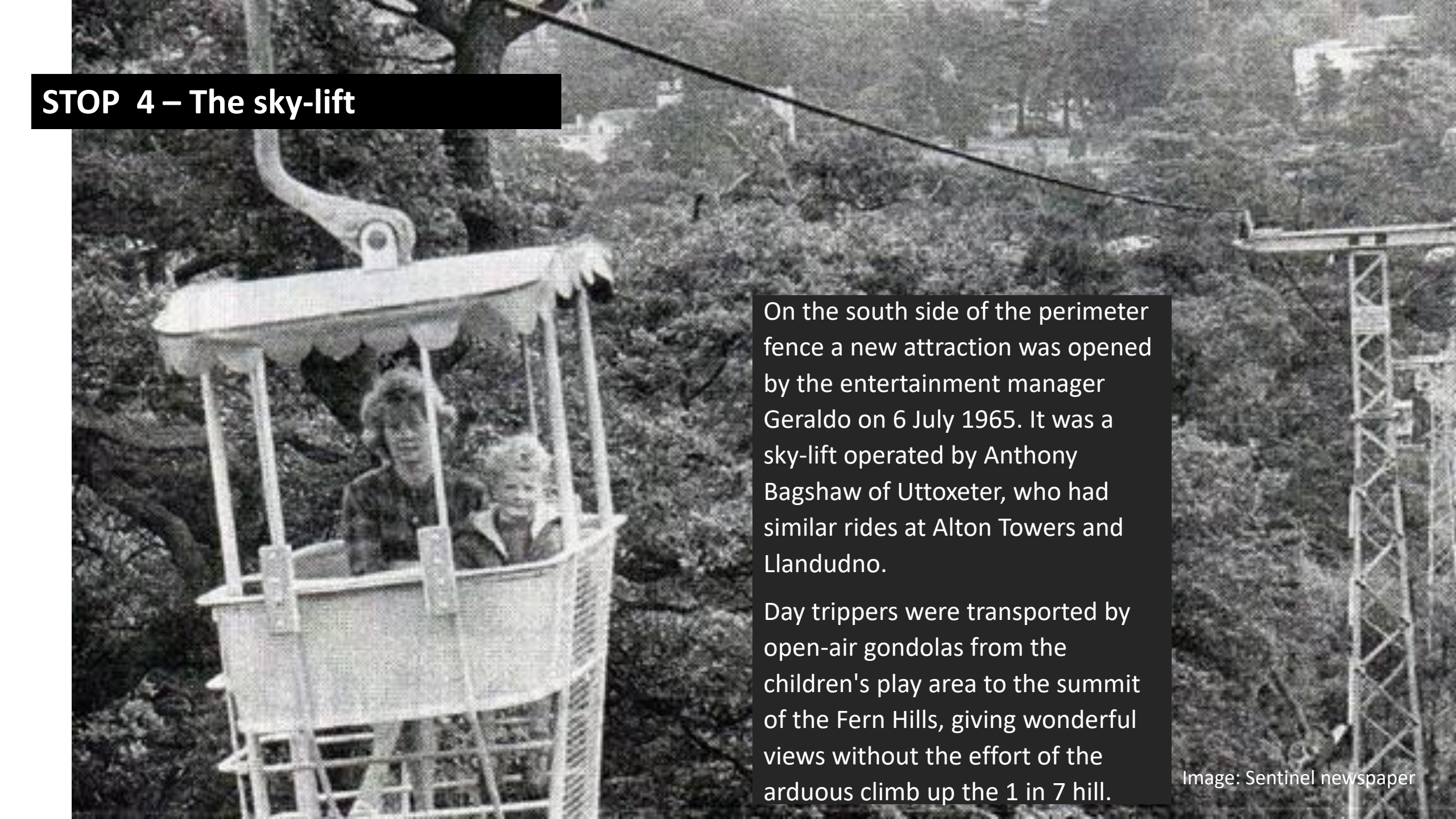
Image: Artist's impression – Alan Myatt

Continuing on beside the boundary fence, 'Cow Pool Pasture' is on the right, while on the left on the other side of the fence is a flat area which was the cricket ground. Cricket was being played at Trentham from at least 1849 when meetings are recorded at the Trentham Inn on the Stone Road.

A two day match was arranged between the All England XII and Staffordshire on 25th and 26th August 1851. Torrents of rain on the second day made play impossible, so they completed the match on the 27th. The result was a draw.

Stafford Cricket Club played at Trentham on a regular basis from 1847.

STOP 4 – The sky-lift

A black and white photograph showing a sky-lift gondola in the foreground, carrying two children. The gondola is a simple wooden basket with a roof and is suspended from a cable. The background is a dense, wooded hillside. A tall metal tower for the sky-lift is visible on the right side of the image.

On the south side of the perimeter fence a new attraction was opened by the entertainment manager Geraldo on 6 July 1965. It was a sky-lift operated by Anthony Bagshaw of Uttoxeter, who had similar rides at Alton Towers and Llandudno.

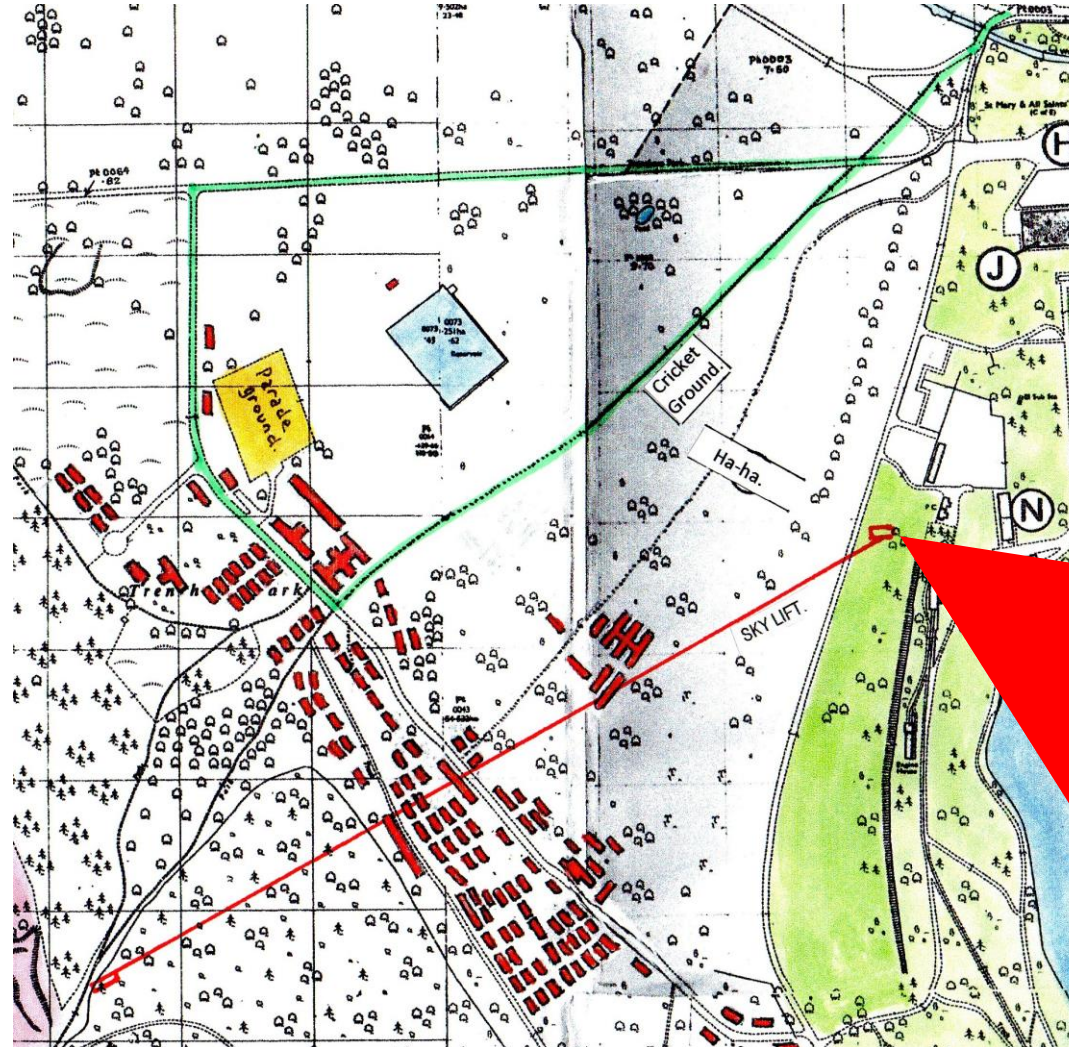
Day trippers were transported by open-air gondolas from the children's play area to the summit of the Fern Hills, giving wonderful views without the effort of the arduous climb up the 1 in 7 hill.

Image: Sentinel newspaper

STOP 4 – The sky-lift

On Sunday 23rd September 1971 the mechanism jammed on a particularly windy day, leaving 20 people stranded in mid-air for five hours, being rescued by firemen with ropes and ladders.

The ride was investigated to determine the cause, but never reopened.



Images: Courtesy of Philip Bradbeer

STOP 5 – Military camp

Bearing right, before the woods, the decaying bases of military huts can be seen along the old military road.

On 17th June 1940 the 505 Field Company Royal Engineers arrived from Knutsford and dug long latrine trenches and erected a forest of bell tents along strict military lines.



Image: Artist's impression - Alan Myatt



STOP 5 – French troops

The tents were soon occupied by over 4000 French soldiers. They included survivors from a brigade of the Foreign Legion and the Mountain Light Infantry, who were diverted from Norway when France fell to the Germans.

A period of uncertainty followed when some troops rallied to General de Gaulle, others chose to be repatriated.

A contingent of French sailors [pictured] were also interned for a time.

The camp was closed by late November 1940.

Image: Sentinel newspaper

STOP 5 – Military Convalescent Depot

That was not the end for Trentham Camp:

In March 1943 Number 122 Military Convalescent Depot with 1,700 beds was established at Trentham Park. It was one of the largest convalescent units in the country.

Nissen huts accommodated the convalescents, plus a gymnasium and NAAFI facilities.

A parade ground was located at the one end of the camp.

Accommodation was increased in August 1944 following a spike in casualties after D Day.

The depot closed when it was transferred to the American camp at Stoneleigh in Warwickshire in July 1945



Background image and map of the camp -
Alan Myatt

STOP 5 – Other Uses of the Camp

In November 1945 Trentham Park became home to Officer Cadet Training Unit No.164 with over 1000 men, until it was relocated to Eaton Hall, Chester in October 1946

Trentham was briefly used as a Polish resettlement camp as the Russians occupied Poland preventing the Poles returning home. They were later housed at Blackshaw Moor near Leek.

The camp's final use came in 1947, when it became a hostel for foreign miners brought in by the National Coal Board when there was a shortage of coal.

The buildings were sold in May 1950 and the park slowly returned to its former public use.



Images - top and middle - private collection
Bottom - Sentinel newspaper

STOP 6 – Other Past Uses of Trentham Park

Trentham Park has seen many uses in previous centuries but few traces remain.

Imagine the area down towards the Gardens with a herd of grazing deer, or thronged with visitors from all corners of the Potteries in their Victorian clothes...

Trentham Park



Trentham Adventure
Playground

Hide and Speak Maze

Google maps

STOP 6 – Dunstall Spring

Dunstall Spring, which emerged from the foot of the Fern Hills was used to supply the reservoir for the military camps during World War Two and had supplied the Cow Pool centuries before that.

In medieval documents in the Sutherland papers, a hermit named Walter is recorded as having cultivated land around Dunstall Spring in 1160.



STOP 6 – The Deer Park

The very first game keeper at Trentham was William Stake in 1723, when the new park was stocked with deer from Sir John Egerton's Wrinchill Park near Betley. The Egertons moved to Tatton Park, becoming Dukes of Bridgewater and today hold the title of Dukes of Sutherland after the male line of the Leveson-Gower's failed.

More deer were purchased in 1762, killed to order to be given as gifts to prominent members of society, including the Bishop of Lichfield. In 1890 there were still over 100 deer in the park.



STOP 6 – Trentham Thursdays

The park was open to the public on Sundays from the early 1800s. The visitors numbered 30,000 people in 1848. The partial opening of the private gardens first occurred during Wakes Week in 1835.

Trentham Thursday was established when a local businesswoman decided to give her staff the whole Thursday off during Wakes Week in 1840, instead of the usual half day. She arranged for them to visit the gardens at Trentham as a treat, others followed her example and by 1842 Trentham Thursday had become an annual holiday.

STOP 6 – Trentham Thursdays



Waiting for the boat home

In 1856 some 40 to 50,000 visitors descended on Trentham by barge, train, gig, or on foot. The crowds began to take liberties with the Duke's generosity, breaking down fences and damaging shrubbery in the park during Wakes Week. The approach roads were obstructed by traders who set up stalls along the highway causing the Duke to offer a field behind the Trentham Inn for their use.

Image: Lovatt Collection Stoke on Trent City Archives

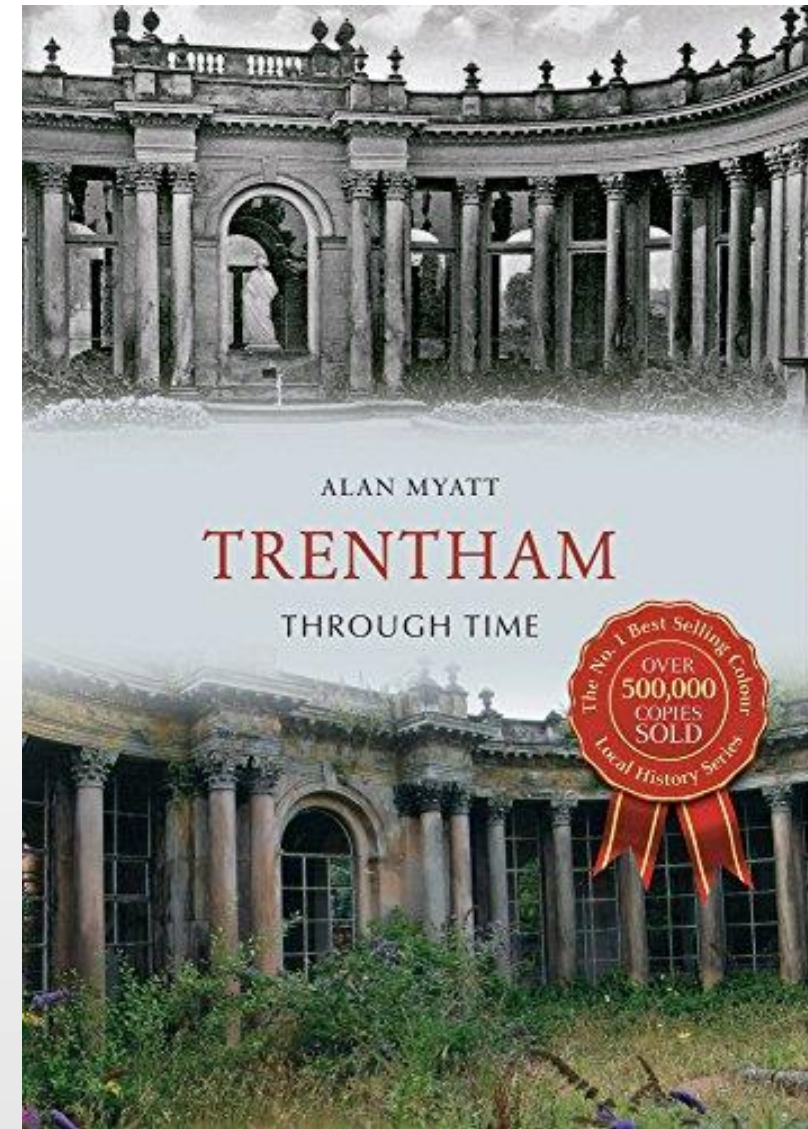
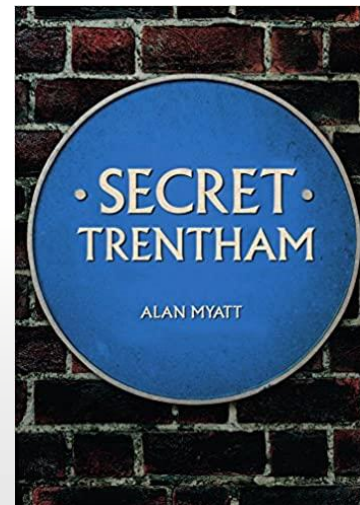
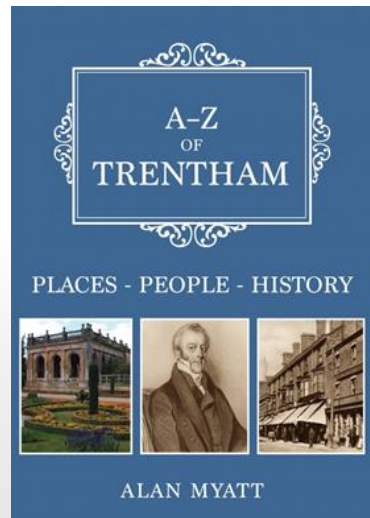
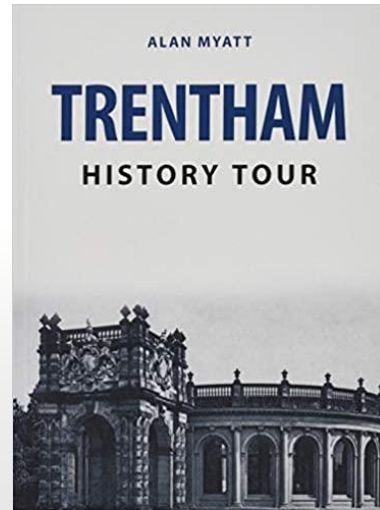
STOP 6 – Trentham Thursdays



Waiting for the boat home

In 1865 the Duke closed off the park to the public. This was only partially successful because there was a public footpath through the park. After much pleading the gates were re-opened, being closed for one day each year as a reminder that it was private land belonging to the Sutherlands. For most visitors the park was a welcome day out in the fresh air and green countryside away from the smoke and grime in other areas of the Potteries.

Books about Trentham
written and illustrated
by Alan Myatt and
available from local
booksellers and online



Thank you for watching!

Researched by Alan Myatt

Produced for Trentham and Hanford Heritage Open Days 2020

Further films and videos available on
www.youtube.com/c/TrenthamHeritage

Contact: trenthamheritage@gmail.com