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THE LAST EARL OF HALLAMSHIRE: Legend, landscape and identity in South Yorkshire

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Introduction

In *Sheffield Troublemakers* David Price refers to an incident during the Revolutionary Wars when King George III, taking a stroll on a beach at Weymouth, saw a group of children playing in charge of a nurse.

'And whose children are those?' asked his Majesty of the nurse.

'May it please your Majesty, they are Mr Shore's of Norton, near Sheffield,' she replied.

'Ah, Sheffield! Sheffield!' exclaimed his Majesty, as he continued his promenade. *'Damned bad place, Sheffield!'* (Price 2008)

This chapter examines how the idea of Anglo-Saxon identity exerted a strong influence upon writers who have collected folklore in Hallamshire, the geographical region that became the city of Sheffield in the modern county of South Yorkshire. It will also investigate how that identity coalesced around two folk heroes, Earl Waltheof and Robin Hood (Robin of Loxley), who are portrayed in literature and imagery as ethnic Saxon rebels who fought against Norman occupation of the region. Both also came to symbolise the region's independence of spirit and its rebelliousness. Today they are regarded as distinctly English national folk heroes but their complex and intertwined links with the folklore of southwest Yorkshire is less well known.

The act of collecting folklore can mobilise tradition in the service of ideologies that help to reinforce ideas and beliefs concerning regional and national identity. Stephanie Barczewski describes how a distinct British identity, constructed during the 18th century, was replaced, in late Victorian England, by 'an elaborate racial hierarchy...which placed the Anglo-Saxon peoples at the top, a crude biological determinism seemingly confirmed by Britain's pre-eminent political, economic and military position' (Barczewski 2000, 124). An interest in Anglo-Saxon ethnicity at this time is reflected in the writings of those who collected and published English legends and folk tales during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The role of folklorists as 'region builders' has often been overlooked, but their influence upon the future development of the discipline has been considerable (Hopkin 2012, 2019).

In 1846 when W.J. Thoms first used the word 'folk-lore' he called specifically for the widespread collection of *English* legends. In doing so, he referred to 'what we in England designate as Popular Antiquities or Popular Literature (though by-the-by it is more a Lore than a Literature, and would be more aptly described by a good Saxon compound, Folk-Lore – the Lore of the People)' (Simpson and Roud 2000, 130). The notion of folklore as being part of a wider concept of an 'authentic national identity' emerged during the Victorian era but assumed a distinctive regional focus in England. The introduction to the Grimm brothers' *Deutsche Sagan* in 1816 refers to fairytales as being 'more poetic' as opposed to legend that is 'more historical' (Hopkin 2019). Interest in the local/regional as opposed to national/international coincided with huge social and economic changes including industrialisation and mass movements of people. Sheffield's population had grown from 10,000 in 1750 to 135,000 in 1851 at the height of the industrial revolution (Hey 2010, 74).

The reputation of South Yorkshire as a centre of opposition to national authority can be traced from the time of the French Revolution when Sheffield became notorious as a centre of radical agitation. The town became the scene of dramatic events including an armed insurrection during the age of the Chartism that ended with the arrest of Samuel Holberry, who had become a cult figure in the city (Price 2008, 44-45). He and seven of his associates were jailed and he died shortly afterwards in York Castle. It has been estimated that between 20 and 50,000 people attended his funeral at the General Cemetery in June 1842. George III's description of the town as 'a damned bad place' reflects the town's radical tradition that has persisted to the present day. Throughout the 1980s the left-wing Sheffield City Council led by David Blunkett pursued a social policy directly opposed to that of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. The defiant flying of the red flag over the town hall in 1981 has become part of the region's folklore and reflected its self-proclaimed autonomy and opposition to national government (Brown, 1981; Pollard 1976, 5).

The rebel traditions of the region are also reflected in Victorian literature. Stephanie Barczewski notes that 'virtually every major fictional text written after 1820 features the conflict between Saxon and Norman as a prominent motif' (Barczewski 2000, 132) and this division is projected backwards in accounts of the history and folklore of southwest Yorkshire. The most influential example is Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1819). His novel is set in the 12th century, a generation after the Norman conquest, and the narrative is located geographically in the valley of the River Don. In his introduction Scott makes explicit reference to region's rich store of legends including desperate Civil War battles and its medieval outlaws. He also mentions the Dragon of Wantley, a legend that first appears in broadsheet ballad of the 1680s. This was reprinted many times and became the basis for a play and an opera during the 18th century. Research has revealed the story originated as a satire directed against the Wortley family who had Norman or Breton origins (Hey 2002, 136-53). During the Elizabethan era the Wortleys were involved in a long and bitter dispute with freeholders and less-powerful neighbours on their estates in Hallamshire who resented the brutal extension of the hunting on Wharnccliffe Chase above the Don (Hey 2002, 144-45; Heywood 2015, 87). The reference to 'the dragon', in the novel, is paired with a reference to the Robin Hood legends as Scott says, 'here flourished in ancient times those bands of gallant outlaws, whose deeds gave been rendered so popular in English song' (Scott 1820). The plot of *Ivanhoe* is centred upon an imagined, on-going struggle between dispossessed Saxons and their Norman lords that post-dated the Norman conquest. Significantly, the outlaw Robin Hood – 'Locksley' – is both a central character and a figurehead for the freedom fighters.

Fiction and fact are often intertwined in folklore and the influence of ideas and characters from literature can be traced in the writings of antiquarians, historians and folklorists. The Rev Joseph Hunter produced what is acknowledged as the earliest collection of dialect, local words and folklore from the Sheffield region (Hunter 1829). Hunter was born in 1783 and *The Hallamshire Glossary* covers the geographical area on the Yorkshire/Derbyshire border that lay close the boundary between the Northern and Midland dialects. In his introduction to a new edition of Hunter's glossary, John Widdowson makes a link between dialect and ethnicity in his reference 'to the earliest dialectical divisions established between Northumbria and Mercia by our forebears, the Germanic peoples who settled in these islands from the fifth century AD' (Hunt 1829, 1983). Hunter was followed by Sidney Addy, a Sheffield historian, folklorist and author of the two-volume *A Glossary of Words used in the neighbourhood of Sheffield* (Addy 1888) and *The Hall of Walthoef* (1893), subtitled 'or the early condition and settlement of Hallamshire'. Addy portrayed the inhabitants of

Hallam as being defined both by dialect and the presence of a physical boundary, formed by the river Sheaf, adding that 'it is difficult to resist the conclusion that Sheffield is the field of the *Sheth*, a place of division' (Addy 1888, xxxii).

Anglo-Saxon Hallamshire

Hallam (*Hallun* in Domesday) was the most southerly of the small shires or historic districts of the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Northumbria and held onto its regional identity the longest. The name is first recorded in a charter of 1161 and it may refer to the rocky outcrops that are prominent features of its landscape. Another possibility is the name came from *halgh*, meaning land on a border (Goodall 1914, 156; Hey 2002, 13). The central core of Hallamshire covered the parishes of Sheffield, Ecclesfield and Bradfield, an area roughly equivalent to those parts of the present-day city, to the west of its two principal rivers, the Don and the Sheaf (Walton 1954; Hey 2002, 11). The southern border was marked by the river Sheaf from which Sheffield took its name. In 829 AD King Egbert of Wessex led an army to take the submission of the Northumbrian King Eanred at the village of Dore, on the banks of the Sheaf, a place-name that means a narrow pass or literally 'a door' (Hey 2002, 15). The regional/national significance of this event is remembered today by an inscription on the village green that says Egbert then 'became the first overlord of all England'. Contemporary lore in the village refers to a tradition that 'first king of England' was crowned in Sheffield and buried in Totley, near Dore (Heywood 2015, 31).

After the Norman conquest the region lost the autonomy it had enjoyed under its Saxon lord, Earl Waltheof, who was recorded as owning a manor in Hallamshire at the time of the Domesday survey. Before the conquest Waltheof's lands in southwest Yorkshire consisted of three distinct settlements: Hallam, Attercliffe and Sheffield, the latter held by a Danish warlord Swein, but according to Domesday this land 'is said to have been inland to Hallam'. The consensus is that 'the name Sheffield applied originally more to a district than to a town...however, a few years after the Domesday inquest, *Hallun* gave place to Sheffield; the district name superseded the town name' (Charlesworth 1943; Hey 2010). The first reference to *Castellum de Seldfeld* (Sheffield Castle) occurs in 1184 and by that time the town was the centre of Norman military power in the region. The Norman Lords of Hallamshire built a motte-and-bailey at a defensive stronghold at the confluence of the rivers Sheaf and Don. This wooden structure was replaced by a stone castle in the late 13th century (Tuck 2019).

Before the industrial revolution Sheffield was a small town hidden in the southern Pennines. It held onto its rural character until the late 18th century but, despite a relatively small population, it had national significance for a number of reasons. Sheffield Castle was the fourth largest fortress in England and its remote location may explain why it was chosen by Elizabeth I as the jail for Mary Queen of Scots who spent a third of her life in the custody of George Talbot, the 6th Earl of Shrewbury, Lord of Sheffield Manor. By the midst of the 16th century, thanks to its unique geography, Sheffield had become the national centre of cutlery manufacture. Robert the Cutler is mentioned in a list of taxpayers in 1297 and Sheffield 'whittles' (long knives kept in a sheath attached to a belt) were well known enough for Chaucer to refer to them in *The Reeve's Tale*. The Company of Cutlers of Hallamshire was established by Act of Parliament in 1624 and the international success of the trade ensured the name continued in use, even after the lordship disappeared with the death of the sixth earl in 1616. It is retained in modern institutions such as Sheffield Hallam University (created in 1992 when Sheffield city polytechnic was renamed to

distinguish it from the University of Sheffield), a Parliamentary Constituency, a Roman Catholic Diocese and in a battalion of the York & Lancashire Regiment.

Earl Waltheof

Regional identity is often expressed via folk narratives and Jacqueline Simpson defines these as being centred upon 'some specific place, person or object that really exists or has existed within the knowledge of those telling and hearing the story' (Simpson 1991). Every nation (and region) has folk heroes whose deeds are recorded in song, ballad and stories 'connected with places well known to their hearers and with people whose names have long been household words' (Hole 1948: 1). Folk heroes may be mythical or real historical figures whose exploits and personal qualities were so remarkable they were handed down from generation to generation.

In the folklore of Hallamshire these characteristics overlapped in Earl Waltheof, a real historical figure who opposed to Norman occupation and Robin Hood, an outlaw who was constantly at odds with authority and an enemy of the rich and powerful. Both were distinctly regional, English symbols of opposition to national authority and, as such, their individual legends combined and coalesced during the Victorian period of legend-making.

Waltheof is described by Canon William Odom as 'the last Saxon Earl of the Manor of Hallam, of which Sheffield became the capital' (Odom 1927, 5). Born in the mid-11th century he was the son of Siward the Danish Earl of Northumbria who led the armies of King Edward the Confessor against Macbeth. Odom claims he was 'the last Earl of purely English blood, tall, and of more than ordinary strength, matchless as a warrior, having slain not a few with his own hands' (Odom 1927, 4). Tradition says he was a devout and charitable leader who was originally destined for a monastic life. But the death of his older brother in battle left him as heir to his father's lands (Scott 1952).

Following the Conquest Waltheof was one of the few Anglo-Saxon nobles who retained land and power, but he was 'treacherous, weak and unstable in character; he again and again failed to keep pledges which he had made' (Odom 1927, 4). When in 1069 a fleet of Viking ships landed in the Humber he joined forces with the Danes, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, 'forming an immense host, riding and marching in high spirits' to attack York. They ravaged and burnt the city and its cathedral, 'slaying many hundreds of Frenchmen and carrying off many hundreds to their ships' (Garmonsway 1953, 205).

In the aftermath of this rebellion the Conqueror felt it was expedient to make peace with the powerful leader of the Northumbrians. In return for him accepting William as his lord, Waltheof was made Earl of Northumbria and was given land in Huntingdon and Northampton, along with the hand of his conqueror's niece, the Countess Judith of Lens. This arrangement lasted for five years but 'the proud spirit of Waltheof...could not endure submission to the Norman yoke' (Odom 1927, 6) and he was implicated in a second plot against the life of the king. He confessed his role but was arrested, imprisoned and found guilty of treason after a trial in Winchester, the ancient capital of Wessex. Waltheof was executed by decapitation on St Giles' Hill on 31 May 1076 (Garmonsway 1953, 213). His corpse was afterward dumped at a crossroads, an act of disrespect that encouraged those who believed he was 'the innocent and murdered martyr of freedom' (Odom 1927, 8). Croyland Abbey in the Lincolnshire Fens promoted the legend of Waltheof as an innocent man, framed by his enemies and his scheming Norman wife who inherited his ancestral lands including the titles bestowed upon

him by the Conqueror. Waltheof had been a generous patron of the abbey and his widow, Judith, had his body transferred from Winchester to Croyland for burial. When a fire ravaged the building in 1091, Waltheof's tomb was opened and the monks discovered that his severed head had miraculously re-joined the body. Encouraged by successive abbots, a cult grew up around his tomb. Within two decades of his death the abbey had become a centre of resistance against the Normans, so much that, according to Orderic Vitalis, 'the news of them [miracles] gladdened the hearts of the English and the population came flocking in great numbers to the tomb of their compatriot, knowing from many signs that he was already favoured of God' ('A Clerk of Oxford' 2013).

Versions of the Waltheof legend were revived in the 19th century by the movement that wished to replace 'Britishness' with a less-inclusive idea of 'Saxon-ness' (Barczewski 2000, 124). In 1875 the invented arms of the earl were incorporated in the stained glass at the Great Hall of Winchester, close to site of his execution, alongside the heraldry of the kings, queens and knights of medieval England. The 13th century Great Hall is a place full of legendary imagery including an 800-year old Round Table, commissioned by Edward I and inspired by Arthurian legend. As Sheffield grew from a small town into a confident, populous and industrial city its civic leaders were equally keen to adopt Waltheof as both founding father and folk hero. Sheffield became a city in 1893 and, in the aftermath of the Second World War its civic planners named a road and a secondary school on the new Manor housing estate in honour of the Saxon leader. The naming was significant because the working-class estate was built within an area that once formed part of a great hunting park that formerly belonged to the noble family that inherited the Lordship of Hallamshire. The most prominent and striking depiction of Earl Waltheof in the modern city is that located in stained glass at the city's Anglican Cathedral, in a window that is dedicated to the Six Worthies of Sheffield. Designed by Christopher Webb in the 1960s it depicts Norman lords, soldiers and assorted benefactors of Sheffield's former parish church since its foundation. In the window Earl Waltheof stands below The Sheaf of Arrows that represents Sheffield's cutlery industry. The symbols that surround him bind his name to city via the River Sheaf, its metalworking traditions and its rebel tradition. His proud appearance alongside those who conquered and occupied English lands in Northumbria underline the local tradition of his defiant stand against the Norman presence in Hallamshire.

The Hall of Waltheof

One of the recurring themes in the Waltheof legend relates to the destruction by burning of the manor of Hallam by the conqueror's forces during the Harrying of the North. In the winter of 1069-70 King William's armies moved to subjugate the north of England against a revolt led by Edgar Atheling, the last remaining English claimant to the throne of Wessex, who encouraged the Danish incursions that Waltheof joined. Joseph Hunter refers to a tradition that 'the resistance of the people of Hallam was most pertinacious, so his vengeance was most signal' (Hunter 1819, 30) and quotes from Domesday how, in the time of Edward the Confessor, the manor of Hallam had been valued at eight marks of silver but by 1086 its value had fallen to just forty shillings. It is now accepted that the 'harrying' of the conqueror's troops did not extend to south-west Yorkshire and that Waltheof, and the Countess Judith, retained their possessions until long after the revolt. Indeed, the presence of an *existing* manor at Hallam is recorded in Domesday, along with the qualification that 'this land Roger de Busli [the Norman Lord] holds of the Countess Judith' (Hey 2002, 13).

The destruction of the hall of Waltheof is a key foundation story in the folklore of Hallamshire. It has exerted its influence upon generations of antiquarian writers, archaeologists and even city planners. After the conquest Waltheof gained new estates in the midlands and south including the earldoms of Huntingdon and Northampton but by the time of Domesday his only remaining possession north of the Trent was the manor of Hallam (Scott 1952). As Earl of Northumbria, Waltheof 'would have resided in Sheffield only occasionally, if at all' (Hey 2010, 14) and his personal link with Hallamshire has grown entirely from one single reference to the presence there of his hall, or court, in Domesday. Forrest Scott believed that his name was remembered strongly in Sheffield more than anywhere else in England because of a clerical error by a Norman scribe: 'The word *aula*, used of Waltheof's estate in Hallam, is now thought not to have a different meaning from the more usual *manerium*; the Domesday scribes were fond of variation' (Scott 1952).

Victorian historians interpreted the significance of the Domesday entry differently. The reference to Waltheof's *aula* suggested to them the presence of a wooden Anglo-Saxon hall or court (Hunter 1819; Addy 1893). Few examples of these are known from archaeology but they were large aisled buildings, constructed with huge oak cruck posts, from which warriors and kings dispensed justice and collected tithes. Hunter was the first historian to suggest the site of the 12th century Norman castle was the most likely location of the Saxon hall of Waltheof (Hunter 1810, 4). This conclusion has been supported by a number of contemporary Sheffield historians (see Hey 2010, 15). Sidney Addy's book on the early history of Hallamshire, *The Hall of Waltheof*, produced no new evidence and made a case for an alternative location in Rivelin Firth near the site of a Roman settlement (Addy 1893), Another historian argued for a third location near a Roman road at Lodge Moor adjacent to Burnt Stones common. This theory used place-name evidence to make a direct link with the local tradition concerning the destruction of Waltheof's hall by fire (Hall 1931). David Hey considered the evidence for this theory to be 'slender and unconvincing' (Hey 2010, 15).

The antiquarian debate concerning Sheffield's origin legend began in the 19th century and has continued to the present day. The quest to locate the 'Hall of Waltheof' has become a regional variant of the ongoing quest to locate the site King Arthur's Camelot, drawing upon ambiguous literary, archaeological and folkloric 'evidence'. It provided the motivation behind past and present archaeological investigations of the surviving ruins in Castlegate, the ancient part of Sheffield city centre, where the remains of the Norman castle stood until 1648. Canon Odom produced his seminal historical sketch of Waltheof as the Anglo-Saxon founder of Sheffield in 1927. He was writing in the same year that two members of the Hunter Archaeological Society announced they had discovered the remains of the *aula* of Waltheof beneath the ruins of Sheffield's castle. The last castle was demolished in the aftermath of the Civil War after which much of its contents and standing structure were removed (Tuck 2019). In 1927-28 a surveyor and archaeologist, Albert Leslie Armstrong, oversaw excavations prior to the construction of the Castle Markets building by the Co-operative society. He was assisted by a local cutler, Joseph Himsworth, who along with Armstrong, were adherents of contemporary ideas concerning 'Saxon-ness'. In his excavation report Armstrong revealed that he had discovered the remains of a 'pre-Conquest Saxon building of timber' that measured '23 feet from north to south and comprised two complete bays and part of a third bay, of a timber building, the roof of which had been supported upon massive crutches or "crucks" of oak' (Armstrong 1930,7). He said the remains of this pre-conquest building were 'both extensive and substantial' and included pottery of Saxon, Norman and Elizabethan date. In 1929 wooden beams found at the site were photographed and the excavator's notes refer to the m having been damaged

in a severe fire. In one account Himsworth says he is 'of the opinion here we have the Aula of the last of the Saxon earls' (Moreland, personal communication 2019).

Armstrong and Himsworth's claims for a Saxon dating remain unsubstantiated due to the destruction of the finds stored on site during the Sheffield Blitz in 1940 (Tuck 2019, 36). The pottery and wooden remains described by Armstrong in the 1920s as 'Saxon' are accepted as having a late medieval date. A fresh investigation of the site by Wessex Archaeology, funded by Sheffield City Council in 2018, found evidence of the original motte-and-bailey including traces of wooden foundations that have been dated to the 11th century (personal communication, 2019). This suggests there *was* an Anglo-Saxon antecedent to the Norman motte-and-bailey but the precise identification of Castlegate as the site of the hall of the last Saxon earl remains unproven. Nevertheless, the excavations at Castlegate in 1927-29 are a lasting example of how the idea of Waltheof, as the founding father of Sheffield, continues to influence the folk of Hallamshire to the extent that it continues to exert an influence upon archaeology and city planning.

Robin of Loxley

Unlike Earl Waltheof there is no unequivocal historical reference to the Robin Hood of the medieval ballads. Robin's exploits are the subject of 38 ballads, the earliest dated to 1450. South Yorkshire is the geographical setting for some of the oldest stories including the so-called *Geste of Robyn Hode* and *Robin Hood and the Potter*. In these ballads Robin appears as an outlawed yeoman who is active on Ermine Street, in the area of northwest Doncaster known as Barnsdale (Hunter 1852, Holt 1982, Heywood 2015). In the medieval period the forest of Barnsdale stretched across what is present-day South Yorkshire from Doncaster southwest to the Rivelin Firth that enclosed the valley of the river Loxley in Hallamshire.

In the folklore of Hallamshire Robin Hood is also known as Robin of Loxley and Robert Locksley. Loxley refers to the hamlet in the parish of Bradfield where he is said to have been born, although in some versions of the story 'Locksley' becomes the name of one of Robin's companions (Ritson 1795). There are Loxley place-names in Warwickshire and Staffordshire but these rival traditions have 'shaky foundations' (Westwood and Simpson 2005). Hallamshire has by far the earliest references to his birthplace and southwest Yorkshire and North Derbyshire has long abounded in Robin Hood locations (Heywood 2015). Joseph Hunter refers to the Loxley Firth as having 'the fairest pretensions to be the Locksley of the old ballads, where was born that redoubtable hero Robin Hood' (Hunter 1819, 3).

In a 1637 survey of the estates held by Duke of Norfolk, in and around Sheffield castle, John Harrison was shown an area of pasture at Great Haggas Croft 'lying near Robin Hood's Bower' in Loxley Firth. His next item refers to the foundations of a 'house or cottage where Robin Hood was born' in the same area of forest. Hunter also mentions 'the remains of a house in which it was pretended he was born were formerly pointed out' (Hunter 1819, 4) and this tradition survived in Loxley until the mid-19th century. An early 16th century manuscript note by Roger Dodsworth provides further evidence of the antiquity of this oral tradition: 'Robert Locksley, born in Bradfield parish, in Hallamshire, wounded his stepfather to death at plough: fled into the woods, and was relieved by his mother until he was discovered' (Hunter 1819, 6).

Joseph Hunter pursued his interest in the Robin Hood legend during his tenure as assistant keeper of the Public Record Office. His 1852 study identified a 'Robertus Hood' in the Wakefield court rolls during the reign of Edward II (1307-27) that was consistent with the date of the *Little Geste*. Nevertheless, he accepted that 'in fact, there were many Robin Hoods, that is, persons who represented him as a dramatic character in the Robin Hood games' (Hunter 1819, 3; Hunter 1852). Hunter was not the first or last author who have identified a 'real' Robin Hood (see, for example, Baldwin 2011) but all attempts have been thwarted by the fact that Robyn or Robert and Hood were common names in medieval period and turn up frequently in parish records and court rolls. For example, in the Rolls of Parliament in 1437 a petition was presented for the arrest of a Derbyshire man, Piers Venables, on the grounds that he had gone 'into the woods in that country, like as it had been Robyn Hood and his meynie' (Hole 1948, 37).

The Earl of Huntingdon as Waltheof/Robin Hood

The idea that Robin was an impoverished or disinherited earl first appears in a series of plays by Richard Grafton and Anthony Munday dating from the late Elizabethan period. In *The Downfall of the Robert Earl of Huntingdon* the story is set during the reign of Richard I (1189-1199) and Robin is identified as a rightful earl outlawed through the plotting of his wicked uncle. In the 1740s the Lincolnshire antiquary William Stukeley, in his construction of an aristocratic genealogy for Robin, identified him as Robert Fitzooth, who held a claim to the earldom of Huntingdon during the reign of King John (1199-1216). Stukeley's invention was adopted by Joseph Ritson, the editor of an influential book, published in 1795, that collected 'all the ancient poems, songs and ballads' associated with the outlaw. Ritson also believed Robin was born at Loxley in Hallamshire and said 'he is frequently styled and commonly reputed to have been Earl of Huntingdon; a title to which, in the latter part of his life, at least, he actually appears to have had some sort of pretension' (Ritson 1795, 1972)

Readers will have noticed the Earl of Huntingdon was one of several titles that were bestowed upon Earl Waltheof by the Conqueror. In 19th century texts the Saxon lords of Hallamshire are described as descendants of the early medieval kings of Scotland through the marriage of Waltheof and Judith's daughter Maud to David, King of Scotland, in 1113. The Countess Judith, the Conqueror's niece, inherited Waltheof's land following his execution and she remained a tenant of the Norman lords of Sheffield. Therefore, the last two Earls of Huntingdon were half-Scottish and half-Norman. This fact became a source of embarrassment for Victorian writers who sought to locate genealogical evidence in support of *Ivanhoe's* depiction of Robin Hood as a Saxon freedom fighter. Invented genealogies and the idea of 'Saxon-ness' have been used as the basis of increasingly convoluted attempts to identify Waltheof and his descendants as historical Robin Hoods. The most elaborate appeared in *Notes & Queries* in 1887 when E. Stredder argued that Robin was a direct descendent of Waltheof by the construction of a pedigree 'just as outlandish as Stukeley's had been' (Stredder 1887; Barczewski 2000, 139). It was a short journey for Robin Hood's invented status as disinherited nobleman and leader of a Saxon rebellion based in Hallamshire to become entwined with existing stories concerning Earl Waltheof. The popular appeal and longevity of these traditions is reflected in a topographical account of 'Robin Hood Country', published in the 1970s, that says the Earls of Huntingdon 'held seats, manors and hunting lodges in Hallamshire and they claimed descent from Waltheof, a local folk hero', adding 'one is inclined to believe that Robin inherited some of the exploits of Waltheof' (Mitchell 1978, 8).

Both figures, one part historical/part legend and the other entirely legend, have been at various times – in both fiction and fact – portrayed, inaccurately, as ethnic Saxons who opposed outsiders who were Norman/French but the truth was far more complex. These ideas appealed to the antipathy their audiences felt towards both the region's ruling aristocracy and looked to the Anglo-Saxon period as a lost 'golden age'. From the Victorian period onwards storytellers and, latterly, makers of film and television adaptations have drawn upon these traditions to construct new versions of the Robin Hood legend. These have replaced the outlawed yeoman with a disinherited nobleman in the spirit of the literary tradition created by Sir Walter Scott. For example, in Disney's *The Story of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men* (1952) and in the television series *Robin of Sherwood* (HTV 1984-86) and *Robin Hood* (BBC 2006-9) the outlaw is identified as the Earl of Huntingdon who is disinherited and forced to flee north, where he takes refuge in Sherwood Forest.

Conclusions

In an essay on the social and economic history of the region, commissioned by the former South Yorkshire County Council, Professor Sidney Pollard refers to Sheffield's independence of spirit and its long-standing tradition of opposition to central authority: 'South Yorkshire...has always been land-locked, inward-looking, and provincial. It has therefore always been somewhere near the very heart of England'. Historically the region 'stands out in one respect, again and again, taking the national lead and setting the tone for national movements' (Pollard 1976, 5).

South Yorkshire was one of the strongholds of the Brexit vote in the referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union. In the 2016 vote 61.56% voted to leave but the narrow 51% majority in the city of Sheffield was more reflective of the wider national result. As this chapter has shown, the folk of England's fifth largest city have long nurtured their reputation for autonomous, radical, even revolutionary behaviour (Price 2008). This tradition reached a peak in the late Victorian era when historians and antiquarians sought evidence for the region's 'Saxon-ness' in the form of its distinctive legends and folklore. As documentary and archaeological evidence from the early medieval period is sparse and open to many and varied interpretations the quest to divine a distinctive regional identity drew heavily upon invented traditions to identify evidence of the town's foundation in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria and its opposition to Norman/French rule. This movement led to interpretations of ambiguous historical, genealogical, folkloric and archaeological evidence to fit a wished-for construction of the past to the extent that one archaeologist has referred to the late Victorian era as Sheffield's 'first Brexit'.

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