

Kelham Island Circular Walk *'Industrial Sheffield'*

Walk summary: A short pavement walk around this once heavily industrialised area with grand buildings from the 18th & 19th centuries.

Distance: 1.6 miles / 2.6 kilometres

Duration: approximately 1 hour not including stops

Terrain: Flat, pavement walking

Nearest Car Park: On road parking or RCP Parking Ltd, Corporation Street/Bridge Street, S3 8RG.

Nearest Super Tram Stop: Shalesmoor



1. Kelham Island Museum

Sheffield began to develop into an important industrial centre during the late 18th and early 19th century as a result of its specialisation in metal working. Harnessing water-power was key to the development of Kelham Island and the surrounding area for industry. The Kelham Island Conservation Area reflects the importance of this area and its development.

Walk up Kelham Island with the mill race on your right

Kelham Island isn't really an island but a man-made spit of land resulting from the construction of the mill race in the 12th century. The mill race or 'goit' diverted water from the River Don to power a corn mill situated at Millsands near Lady's Bridge that belonged to the Lord of the Manor. Apparently the island was named after the Town Armourer, Kellam Homer, who set up a grinding workshop in 1637. Some water still flows in to the goit and you can see the nine pillars or footings of the Britannia Corn Mill which sat astride the goit. The buildings were demolished in 1975. From here the goit is culverted running beneath Alma Street with the outfall on Nursery Street.

Bear left through Kelham square following cycle network 627 onto the Upper Don Trail, with the river on your left.

Across the river you will see a work of street art underneath the Riverside pub, by the illustrator Phlegm. Phlegm grew up and lives in Sheffield and his work can be found throughout the city and indeed across the world.

Continue along the trail and pause this audio until you reach the roundabout. Cross over safely using the crossing on your right and walk through the metal archway on to the Upper Don Walk and continue down the footpath. Page | 2

2. The Upper Don Walk

Look out for the flash of blue as kingfishers whizz by along this stretch of river. They are often seen here. Just after the first interpretation board, if you look over the railing, you will see the outfall of the goit from Kelham Island.

Further along on your right, after passing the second interpretation panel, you will reach a stone rectangular column. This is a memorial to the victims of the devastating Great Sheffield Flood of 1864. Due to the expansion of Sheffield, a better water supply was required and work began to build a dam to impound the waters in a reservoir in the hills above Sheffield. Dale Dyke is a tributary of the River Loxley. Dale Dyke Dam failed as the reservoir was filling for the first time, unleashing some 650 million gallons of water. The sudden and overwhelming rush of water roared down the Loxley Valley into Sheffield devastating all in its path. At least 240 people lost their lives and in Malin Bridge alone 102 people including 11 members of one family perished. In addition to the massive loss of life, total or partial destruction occurred to around 5,000 properties including 415 dwelling houses, 106 factories/shops, 64 other buildings, 20 bridges and 4478 cottage/market gardens.

Carry on along the footpath until it veers round to the right.

3. Lady's Bridge

This area of Sheffield is now known as Riverside Exchange after the Exchange Brewery that has stood here since 1852, but was also known as Millsands. The first industrial use of waterpower in the town was probably here and central to the later development of the area. The weir in the river helped raise a head of water for the mills of the area but causes a barrier for fish wanting to move upstream. The concrete structure that you can see on the face of the weir is an easement which

changes the flow of the water over the weir to allow stronger swimming fish to ascend the obstacle.

The bridge that crosses the river is Lady's Bridge, the oldest crossing on the River Don in Sheffield. It was named after the Chapel of Our Blessed Lady which stood at the south east end of the bridge. The bridge survived the 1864 Great Sheffield Flood intact, although many others were swept away.

The beautifully glazed brick buildings on the opposite side of the bridge are the Grade II listed Royal Exchange Buildings. They are complemented by the Royal Victoria Buildings, also Grade II listed, on this side of the bridge.

The buildings were constructed in 1900 for John Henry Bryars, a successful animal breeder and vet who cared for the Midland Railway Company's dray horses that were stabled here. The stables were served by a farrier's shop and a sick bay and the vet's surgery was at the rear of the Royal Exchange Buildings. The surgery entrance is marked by a device incorporating a horse shoe and horse's head.

During the First World War, the stables became the home of the famous Tommy Ward's elephant, Lizzie - acquired by Ward's to replace cart-horses commandeered by the Army. Later still, in 1928, the stables were converted by local firm Batchelor's into their first pea canning factory. For more information about all these points of interest please take a look at the interpretation panel.

Follow the footpath to the right as it leads on to Bridge Street. Turn left here, and left again to cross Lady's Bridge.

4. Nursery Street

Turn left into Nursery Street.

Shortly, on the right, you will see the Old Coroners Court built in 1913. This former mortuary and court is now a commercial property. Opposite stands a pocket park, a green area that offers a good resting spot. **Pause the audio while you try and spot the Stoneface carved in a rock that overhangs the river.**

Continue down Nursery Street. After passing the New Testament Church of God on the right hand side of the road you will see Aizlewood Flour Mill. This was originally the site of the former nursery gardens of Sheffield Castle. The mill was built in 1861 alongside Sheffield's first railway and railway station, Bridgehouses. The line carried grain from the cornfields of Lincolnshire and the grain would be carried across a bridge from the railway goods yard into the top floor of the building before descending by gravity through the various milling processes.

Bridgehouses, was the terminal station of the Sheffield, Ashton-under-Lyne and Manchester Railway. The station would have been approached by a ramp on Nursery Street and on the opposite corner stood a public house, The Manchester Railway Hotel, it was renamed The Harlequin in 2006. The station opened in 1845 and operated until the opening of a 600 metre viaduct across the Don Valley. Known as the Wicker Arches, the viaduct supported the new Sheffield Victoria station that opened on 15 September 1851. From 1851 until 1865 the station was used for freight.

Cross onto Bridgehouses roundabout safely using the first crossing on your right.

5. Bridgehouses roundabout

Look over to your left and you'll see an old iron footbridge crossing the river. Before the building of the road bridge you have just crossed, passenger access to the station from the city area was by a footbridge. The original footbridge was swept away in the Great Sheffield Flood in 1864 and the successor to this bridge is cared for by the friends of Bridgehouses footbridge group who are working to restore it to a functional footbridge. As part of the project they have created a signpost pointing to Sheffield's twin cities, such as Estelí, and other places called Sheffield across the globe.

Cross over the main road onto Mowbray Street to pass the Riverside Pub. At Brewery Wharf, cross on to the right side of the street.

6. Mowbray Street

Turn left to follow the footpath along Mowbray Street.

This area of Sheffield was heavily industrialised and the remains of that industry can be seen in the remaining original buildings as well as the names of the new buildings. Page | 5

Sheffield is best known for its cutlery and steelworks but the damage to the health of the workers shortened lives considerably. A report written by Friedrich Engels about the area in 1844 states that;

“By far the most unwholesome work is the grinding of knife-blades and forks, which, especially when done with a dry stone, entails certain early death. The unwholesomeness of this work lies in part in the bent posture, in which chest and stomach are cramped; but especially in the quantity of sharp-edged metal dust particles freed in the cutting, which fill the atmosphere, and are necessarily inhaled. The dry grinders’ average life is hardly 35 years, the wet grinders’ rarely exceeds 45.”

As the road splits, take the right hand fork along Harvest Lane to where the road forks into three.

7. Burton Road

Ignore the options to your left and right and head along Burton Road.

You will soon see an old arch, painted yellow, on the right hand side of the road. It has a horse shoe in the keystone. This isn't in fact a horse shoe for good luck; it's the wrong way round for that. It's actually the underside of a horse's hoof, you can see the 'frog' part of the hoof in the design. The building was once part of the Clarence Works. The yard was the wheelwright and blacksmith works of John Grayson & Sons. The building is now used as the Yellow Arch Studios - many famous Sheffield musicians have recorded here, including The Arctic Monkeys and Richard Hawley who reflects on Sheffield's history in many of his songs such as 'Lady's Bridge'.

Towards the end of Burton Road, after passing Percy Street on the left, you can see the arch of the Albyn Works. Joseph Pickering and Sons operated from here, they produced a polishing paste widely used in the cutlery and plate industries and moved

to the new 'Polish Works' in Burton Road. The business continued expanding and in 1880 included the world famous brand 'Blanco' – a pure white compressed block that could, by the addition of a little water, be applied to soldier's leather-work with a sponge, rag or brush. They sold it to the local Hillsborough barracks who adopted his product. Their extra white webbing was much admired and this led to its adoption by the rest of the army. It was also marketed to the public as early as 1888 as a whitening for cricket shoes and gloves as well as tennis shoe. The Polish Works was renamed 'Albyn Works' from the Latin *albus* meaning white.

The works closed in the 1980s after the drop off of sales of Blanco, and the loss of Sheffield's cutlery and silverware meant that the polishing paste sales declined.

At the end of Burton Road you will join Neepsend Lane.

8. Neepsend Lane

As you turn left into Neepsend Lane look across the road. Can you see an very small, old brick building marked 'gentlemen' This former gents toilet served the men and boys going to and from work in the heyday of the steelworks. Helpfully, it was sited hanging above the Don, ideal for waste removal!

Beyond the toilet you can see Samuel Osborn & Co Ltd's Rutland Works. Built 1919-20 as the Spring Shop for Samuel Osborn & Co., the Heart and Hand seen in the decorative plaques were used as trademarks by Osborns. It has been restored and converted to offices and is now known as Insignia Works.

Osborne set up his business in 1851 as a file manufacturer. Rapid expansion followed with the purchase of other works finally with the purchase and expansion of Rutland Works in 1885. Osborn, like many other steel makers, showed an interest in his workers health and in particular grinders asthma and lead poisoning which were by far the two most prevalent illnesses. By 1864 he discovered an amalgam to replace the soft bed of lead in which the files were placed when being cut by hand. In an effort to reduce contact between his workers and lead a file cutting machine was developed although the craftsmen feared for their jobs as well as a loss of quality of the handcrafted products and opposed the move. Their fears were unfounded.

Walk a short distance down the lane and cross over the road to pass through the arch onto the Upper Don walk.

Once you have read the interpretation panel and spotted the flue holes of Neepsend Rolling Mill Furnace site follow the path alongside the river to reach Ball Street Bridge.

9. Ball Street Bridge

This bridge is a Grade II listed structure originally built in 1856 and then rebuilt in 1864 after the Great Sheffield Flood. It was widened in 1900.

Cross to the far side of the bridge to see the Grade II listed Kelham Island weir. The weir is one of the largest in Sheffield and originally drove Kelham Wheel which powered a cutlers wheel, a silk mill and then a cotton mill. The weir serves no purpose now but is, unfortunately a barrier to fish moving freely in the river. The concrete baulk that you can see on the face of the weir at Ball St Bridge is an easement. An easement is fixed across the face of the weir sloping downwards to the apron. In this instance a pre-cast concrete baulk has been used. Where the baulk meets the weir crest a notch is cut. In combination the notch and baulk create a channel of water across and over the weir through which fish can swim. The easement creates an attraction flow of water – which, as it suggests, attracts the fish as it would in a natural situation, and encourages them to move up river

As the weir is listed it would be unthinkable to break the weir and install a technical fish pass similar to those seen at Brightside or Meadowhall. Easements are a less invasive way of helping fish to ascend the weir. Whilst it has been designed to provide passage over the widest flow range possible it is a relatively simple low cost solution aimed at improving fish passage, but can't ensure passage 100% of the time.

Cross the river to reach the other end of the bridge.

10. Alfred Becket & Sons

The building to the right of the original sign of Alfred Beckett & Sons is the Cornish Works. James Dixon bought this former rolling mill site in 1819 and converted it into workshops for silver and plated goods. In the 1830s the site was expanded into the Cornish Works until in the 1860s the site covered some 4 acres. The “Cornish” in the buildings name is thought to derive from the manufacture of Britannia metal which is made up of 93% tin which came from Cornwall. Until World War I Cornish Place was powered by steam power with a steam engine situated in the engine house. You can still see the 135 feet high chimney. The decline in cutlery making in Sheffield meant that eventually the business closed for good in 1992 and since 1998 the building has been converted in to apartments.

The Alfred Beckett building was known as the Brooklyn Works and these were constructed in the mid-19th century for the firm of Alfred Beckett, a manufacturer of steel, saws and files. The building was seriously damaged in the Great Sheffield Flood resulting in Alfred Beckett putting in a compensation claim of £123 11s 2d for damage to the works. It was reported that:

“...a large steam engine boiler was torn from its bed, and washed down some hundreds of yards into the works of Messrs. Wheatman and Smith. A quantity of machinery was broken to pieces, furnaces were extinguished, and various finished goods were spoiled.”

Alfred Beckett & Sons Ltd continued to manufacture at the Brooklyn Works until the mid-1960s. The building stood empty for a number of years and to save it from demolition it was declared a listed building in 1985. The Works has been a residential property with office space for small businesses since the 1990s.

Continue past Alfred Beckett & Son’s works and along the length of Ball Street.

11. Green Lane

Turn left into Green Lane.

Shortly, on the left hand side of the road you will see the ornate entrance gate and clock tower of Green Lane Works, described by Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, scholar of history of art and, especially, of history of architecture, as *“the most spectacular survival of factory architecture in the city”*. The works were established in 1795 and

ornamental stove grates were manufactured here before the works were expanded and the ornate gate house was built in 1860. The works continued to make stove grates and fenders until 1930. Between 1930 and 2007 when the works closed it produced files and then agricultural tools and parts for farm machinery. The site is now part of the Little Kelham development of sustainable housing and cafes, shops and creative spaces.

Take the fourth right turn onto Ebenezer Place to reach South Parade.

12. City Life Chapel

The rear of the City Life Chapel is on Green Lane but the impressive frontage is on South Parade. Formerly known as The Ebenezer Wesleyan Chapel it was built on a piece of ground known as Bowling Green and opened in 1823 followed by its schools in 1831.

Turn left and then left again onto Bowling Green Street.

The Grind café, at the end of the road on the left hand side, offers a good break for refreshments.

From there, bear right, along Alma Street, and pause the audio until you reach The Fat Cat pub.

The industrial nature of this area meant that Beer Houses or Public Houses existed on nearly every street. With the decline of industry, most closed in the 20th century with only a few remaining from the 19th Century. The Fat Cat dates from 1850 when it was originally called the Alma. On the corner of the building there is a flood marker showing the height of the floods in 1864 and 2007.

Sheffield has become famous for its craft ales. Kelham Island Brewery, next on the left, is testament to that. It started life in the beer garden of the Fat Cat in Alma Street. The first brew was in September in 1990, making Kelham Island Brewery the first new independent brewery in Sheffield for almost 100 years. Since that time all four of Sheffield's large breweries have closed: Whitbread went in 1993, Hope & Anchor on Claywheels Lane finished in 1994 and both Stones Brewery & Wards Brewery closed in 1999, leaving Kelham Island Brewery as Sheffield's oldest brewery still in production.

Opposite the brewery is part of the old Globe Steel Works, so named for William Ibbotson's desire to sell his wares around the world. Built in 1825, the Works produced steel, tools and cutlery on the one site in an integrated process driven by steam power. They made table knives, spring knives, steel and tools and specialised in making Bowie knives for the American market.

The Globe Works received considerable damage in an explosion in 1843 during the industrial unrest between employers and unions, known as the 'Sheffield Outrages.' According to a report by Friedrich Engels the owner of Globe Works, a Mr Ibbotson *"had made himself obnoxious.....by low wages, the exclusive employment of knob sticks (strike breakers) and the exploitation of the Poor Law for his own benefits."* Rattening is an old term used in northern England and is the practice of sabotaging machinery or tools as part of an industrial dispute. An extreme version of 'rattening' was used in that gunpowder was dropped down the chimneys of oppressive employers or into the grinding troughs of those who were strike breakers or refused to join the union. Mr Engels reported that *"Considerable damage was inflicted by the explosion and all the working men who came to view it regretted only that the whole concern was not blown in the air"*

The impressive frontage and entrance of the Globe Works is on Penistone Road and is now known as the Globe Business Centre.

The entrance to Kelham Island Museum is on the left. The Museum is closed on Fridays and Saturdays.

References

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