



# Crafting the Past

Empowering Communities through  
Creative Writing, Visual Narratives,  
Memory, and Place-Making.

*edited by*  
*Guilherme Pozzer and*  
*Hakeem Ogunmuyiwa*

# Crafting the Past

Empowering Communities through Creative Writing, Visual  
Narratives, Memory, and Place-Making.

*edited by*  
*Guilherme Pozzer and*  
*Hakeem Ogunmuyiwa*

2024

Crafting the Past: Empowering Communities through Creative Writing, Visual Narratives, Memory, and Place-Making.

Editors: Guilherme Pozzer and Hakeem Ogunmuyiwa

First Published in Sheffield in 2024.

This edition includes corrections made since the first printing.

Copyright of individual texts and images remains with the authors.

The moral rights of the authors and producers are asserted.

Designer: Guilherme Pozzer

Cover: Guilherme Pozzer

Cover image credit: "View of Kelham Island Museum in Sheffield, industry and steelmaking history museum with interactive galleries and on-site craftsmen, UK" Stock Image ID 434217416

## **Acknowledgements**

We are deeply grateful for the invaluable contributions and support from the participants, the University of Sheffield, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, the Department of Archaeology, and particularly, Lizzy Craig-Atkins, Jennifer Vanderpool, Julian Sobrino Simal, Jonathan E. Bradley, and Robin Hughes and Jenny Morton from Joined Up Heritage Sheffield. This project would not have been possible without your dedication and generosity.

This project was funded by The University of Sheffield via the QR Policy Support Fund.

Download this booklet at <https://doi.org/10.15131/shef.data.27075115.v1>

# Contents

**Foreword** \_\_\_\_\_  
Guilherme Pozzer

**Tinsley Towers** \_\_\_\_\_  
Asia Joanna Wala

**Belonging** \_\_\_\_\_  
Carl Clayton

**Then I remembered...** \_\_\_\_\_  
Charu Asthana

**One** \_\_\_\_\_  
Chivonne Barrington Head

**Every day** \_\_\_\_\_  
David Holmes

**Tudor Cottage - Andover St.** \_\_\_\_\_  
Deborah Egan

**Ancestral Roads** \_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth

**The screwdriver** \_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth

**War** \_\_\_\_\_  
Elizabeth

**How?** \_\_\_\_\_  
Ethel Maqeda

**Nostalgia** \_\_\_\_\_  
Fiona Milne

**A carving knife** \_\_\_\_\_  
Hugh Waterhouse

**Too much steel** \_\_\_\_\_  
Hugh Waterhouse

**In the field**\_\_\_\_\_

James Thompson

**Why would they bother?**\_\_\_\_\_

Joyce Bullivant

**Sheffield building formerly loved**\_\_\_\_\_

Laura Eddey

**Progress**\_\_\_\_\_

Anonymous

**Neepsend Chinese chequered history**\_\_\_\_\_

Jude Warrender

**Sad day**\_\_\_\_\_

Jude Warrender

**Job Stone**\_\_\_\_\_

Mary Groover

**Pride**\_\_\_\_\_

Nick Duggan

**Streetlights?**\_\_\_\_\_

Robin Hughes

**Never static. It flows.**\_\_\_\_\_

Rhonda Allen

**Industrial roots**\_\_\_\_\_

Richard Bramall

**The coal mine**\_\_\_\_\_

Rita Schmidt

**Excavating memories**\_\_\_\_\_

Sally Rodgers

**Riots**\_\_\_\_\_

Shelan Holden

**Home**\_\_

Terezia Rostas

## Foreword

Guilherme Pozzer

Cultural heritage is a powerful force that shapes our understanding of place and connects the past with the present. Yet, the narratives of heritage often overlook or even "actively forget" the lived experiences of those most impacted by deindustrialization, particularly in post-industrial communities. Sheffield's industrial past presents a unique opportunity to challenge traditional narratives and forge new, inclusive approaches to heritage, building more diverse relationships with the city's industrial heritage and exploring connections with memory and place-making, as proposed by the knowledge exchange project *Crafting the Past*.

The project employed Community-Based Research principles, prioritising relationality and democratic participation. Multiple stakeholders, including community members, local organizations, and researchers, collaborated to generate knowledge from and for the citizens, aiming to promote positive social impact. We viewed Sheffield's heritage as a result of the historic layering of cultural values and attributes, recognising its citizens as both integral parts and active agents in shaping the cultural landscape.

These approaches can not only contribute to steering current heritage practices but also offer new perspectives to strengthen the city's Heritage

Strategy (2021-2031), the first grassroots, community-led strategy in the UK. This strategy aims to celebrate and promote heritage diversity, recognising its educational, social, well-being, and environmental benefits.

Adopting such approaches to bring light to citizens' narratives about the past is timely because living memory of industrial cultural legacies and their social impacts is short, and its value has only recently been recognised.

Through tailored arts-based workshops in creative writing and visual narratives for members of Sheffield communities, the project aimed to encourage participants to share memories, stories, and cultural heritage through creative means.

The workshops offered a range of engaging activities to explore memory and heritage in Sheffield. Initially, participants were invited to share their experiences to explore its significance and the existing links between them.

Participants had the opportunity to creatively express their memories and stories making use of flash-fiction techniques (written or recorded these are very-short stories in which a full narrative is conveyed within a limited space); and visual narratives (sketches, line art, gesture drawings, hatching and cross-hatching, stippling/dot work, and scumbling & scribbling) to express memories and connections with Sheffield's heritage.

The project welcomed contributions in any art format that felt most comfortable to the contributor. However, the option for



facilitating these particular creative writing and visual narratives techniques aimed also to invite readers to become active participants of the project, filling in the gaps and adding their own unique interpretations to these fragments of a narrative. At the end of each session, participants were invited to reflect and discuss how memories shape people's perception of a place and its heritage.

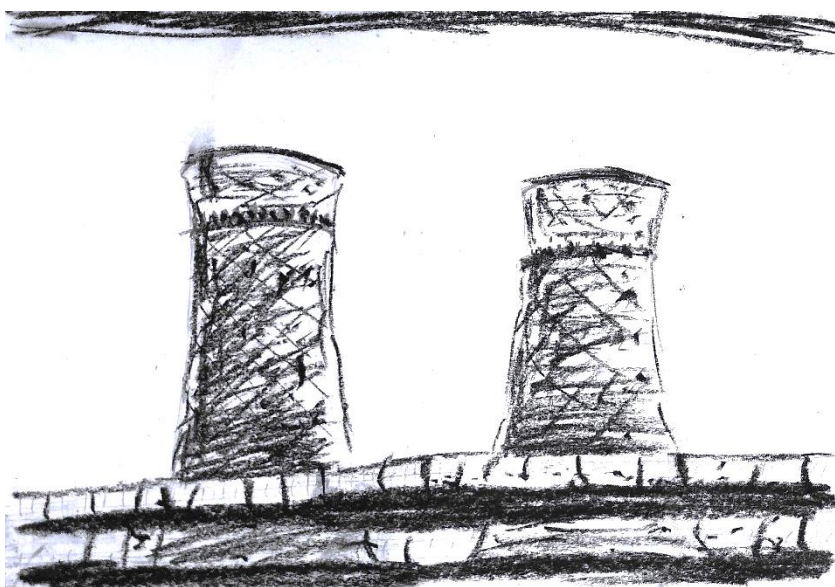
By collecting these narratives, the project aimed to provide community members with tools for creative expression and to explore how diversity impacts experiences with Sheffield's industrial heritage, as well as to bridge academia and policymakers through creative exchanges.

This anthology booklet, featuring the collected narratives, serves as a platform for diverse voices and lived experiences, fostering a sense of inclusion and agency.

Therefore, this project not only aimed to amplify citizens' historical perspectives but also to generate community-led narratives that contribute to a deeper understanding of Sheffield's industrial past and heritage and its ongoing impact on the city.

# Tinsley Towers

*Asia Joanna Wala*



# Belonging

*Carl Clayton*

Moving to Sheffield was interesting because it started off with my father. He had lived down the South but decided to move up to Chesterfield. He had relatives all over the north of England in various areas. Chesterfield just happened to be a sort of convenient central location.

After he moved up, one of my brothers decided also to move up from the south of England to Chesterfield because he liked the area as well. He'd come up and visited my parents and liked it and so decided to move up. And I came shortly after that.

I went through the same process and had the opportunity to come up and I remember when we first moved to Sheffield and I did have a friend who was able to show us around and introduce us to some of the areas because we were thinking of where we could settle, where we might buy a house.

And so he took us around in the car and I was always fascinated by the sort of contrast to London. Even though you have the central urban part of Sheffield, it still had just remains of an old Industrial in some ways run down place. But in a car, you only had to travel a few minutes and then you were out in the surrounding countryside and the Peak District. And that really captivated me, how easy this transition was from the industrial heart and into the open countryside.

The first time I went for a walk-up Mam Tor. At the top you get these wonderful views that open up all the way around.

For someone who came from a London suburb, where to get out into the countryside really involved quite a serious journey either by car or public transport before you reach some nice countryside, this really was quite a revelation.

And the other thing was the people. I know it's a bit of a cliché but yes, I think the people in Sheffield and the surrounding areas really are more open and friendly than you tend to get in London. It was much easier to sort of make contact with people.

It was just small things like whenever you got on a Sheffield bus, the bus driver would always address you as “love”. A completely gender free expression. Men and women were both addressed as “love”. And you always said “thank you” to the bus driver when you got off again. It was just a lot more relaxed and friendly place.

I really felt that this could be my home.

## **Then I remembered...**

*Charu Asthana*

When I initially came to the UK, I didn't travel in the town but when I started travelling, going to museums and so on, and I remembered how my father used to say "that is a steel city"... and he got a knife from there during the British era.

Then I remembered... So yeah, then I started probably I mean moving around Sheffield and seeing all the steel factories and how once upon a time it was like a hub for engineering and my husband is an engineer.

And so my father came and visited Sheffield. It was very nice because it was quite well known in the 1940s and 50s for producing that knife, that special knife that I saw on Jaipur arms from India. It was nice to see the connection.

# One

*Chivonne Barrington Head*

One kneels down, two stand up,

a movement is born.

Three stand up, none kneel down.

We thrive, frequent challenges.

To fall down, one kneels.

This happens 100 times.

And the building has black eyes from flame throwers.

The weirs flow and one hold his hand.

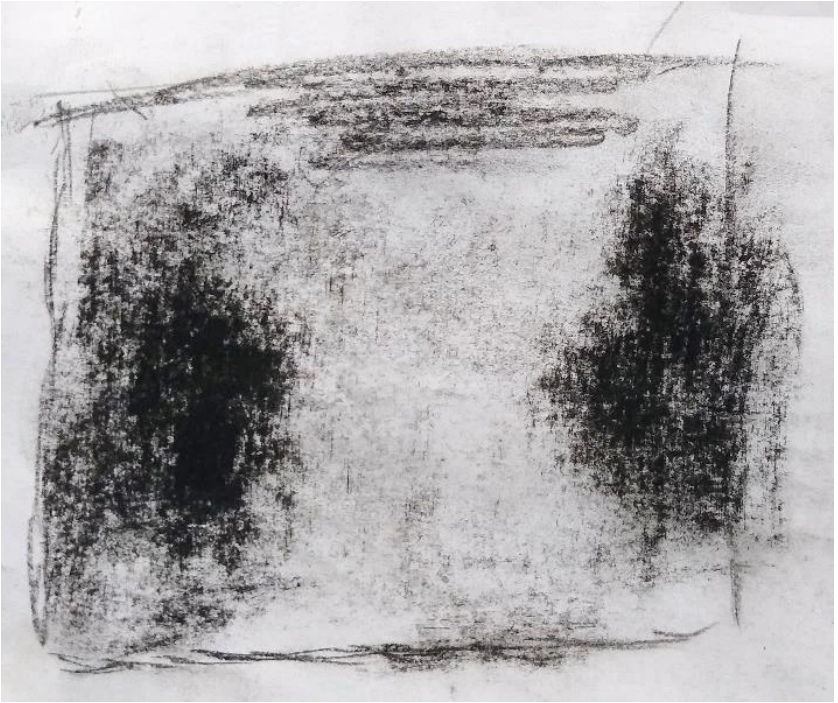
One stands to bring him from his knees,

and they hold position.

Look down from the windows to shout your name.

The birds have their beaks ajar,

and nature has the answer to everything.



*Chivonne Barrington Head*

# Every day

*David Holmes*

I'm going to tell a story that I experience every day.

I live right on the edge of the built city. In one direction, I can walk 10 minutes down to the Super Tram stop past houses all the way. If I go in the other direction, it's open fields right out into the wildest part of the Peak District.

Every day, I walk with the dog down through fields into the bottom of the river Loxley. And there I walk past a beautiful old mill pond, man made water channels that channel water out of the river and back into them.

I walk past an old water wheel which scandalously is just falling apart, even though it's supposedly a protected scheduled ancient monument and a great two-star listed building.

But every day I walk past these features, and it just reminds me of how the past still lives in this amazing valley. And it's brought to life through our everyday experiences.

And for me that is part of my everyday story and heritage is just threaded through it every single day I walk down the valley.



## **Tudor Cottage - Andover St.**

*Deborah Egan*

Situated in one of the most  
deprived wards in the UK in  
terms of

Education

Employment

Mortality

I lived here.

The walls are made of

mud + small stones.

The chimney is falling down.

Housing unchanged in 500 years .



Deborah Egan

# Ancestral Roads

*Elizabeth*

I took a WEA course about Sheffield – not just its history, but its geography too. We compared old maps of the city, some from the early 1800s and others from 50 years later, to see how Sheffield had changed and grown. For two terms, we studied in classrooms, then we spent a term exploring the city in person, bringing our classroom learning to life.

Those outings were some of the best experiences I've had. It was like really getting to know the city intimately. We went to Attercliffe and explored hidden corners, peeking behind walls, into rivers and streams, into the canal.

I could connect with my family because some of my ancestors had lived in that area. One even had a shop in Attercliffe. It felt like I was connecting with them.

I'd been to Attercliffe a few times before with the WEA, as they had a Learning Centre there. I'd also been to Darnall, through Attercliffe Road to get there. And on Staniforth Road, there was a building that had been occupied by some of my ancestors.

Exploring the city today helps me connect with my... ancestors. I never met them. They died long before I was born.

# The screwdriver

*Elizabeth*

The screwdriver was enough. It took out a few screws in the lock and the door opened - the house still had running water - and his friend had the chance to connect up the electricity to the next door's meter. The local group from church were happy to do whitewashing and shift in a few beds.

What more was needed? Fred and Jack moved in. They could cook and sleep there.

Oops. They have to go. The house has to be demolished. Is there another screwdriver-openable door to give access to a house?

# War

*Elizabeth*

The men were recorded. The Ministry of War could help. My dad, my uncles, my cousins could all be found from their war records.

The women no. They were physiotherapists (even though my Auntie H wanted to travel the world and read books all day and find new places to explore).

Where's the archive of the women? Have I just failed to look? Hmm – Maybe I could go to the archives and ask. How about a project about childhood and war? Would that be a way of getting people to tell their stories?

How about a project about childhood and war? Would that be a way of getting people to tell their stories? Could I ask people at the community centre? People from Asia and the Middle East? People in the care homes?

What is war? Does it have to be a massive war? Or just a war between the powerful and the weak? The people and the authorities?

## How?

*Ethel Maqeda*

How does a place where people are laid to rest, a constant reminder of death, a collection of stones bearing inscriptions of dates, names, and logs of who belonged to whom – all grey and half crumbling – become that place of sanctuary, a place for quiet reflection, a place to listen to a book on Audible or your favourite playlist, “The Best World Music 2022”?

How do the voices of loved ones, long gone, whose graves you’ve never seen – a grandma’s laugh, a sister’s giggle, an aunt’s playful rebuke reverberate in this place of silence and loneliness?

How is it that you find serenity here in Sheffield General Cemetery and not in the memory of a cemetery thousands of miles away where your loved ones rest?

# Nostalgia

*Fiona Milne*

I'm 60 now... It doesn't seem sensible to have got to that age so suddenly... but Sheffield is one of my key memories.

Back in the day there used to be a lot more celebration of things. We used to have a Lord Mayor's parade. The university, they used to have a rag week, and they'd have a parade and floats and everything for that. And there was the Sheffield show which was magnificent and they were real parts of being part of the city and belonging, when everybody came together.

And I know it's a thing of much division.

More recently, the Christmas lights in Sheffield - it used to be something absolutely amazing.

Times move on and things change, and expectations change. But there was a real atmosphere around all of that bringing things together.

And another sort of side note to one of the things of progress that's not always good - Fargate and back when I was a child and certainly up to mid-twenties.

At least during the winter, it was a roosting sight for starlings. They used to roost on the buildings, and it's fascinating and tragic that today murmuration, as they call them, of starlings is really celebrated on wildlife programs because they're absolutely stunning.

And in Sheffield City Centre, through the winter, you got one every night for free but then over time the things changed and it's now pigeons are a problem in the south of Birley, and the starlings, although they are just starting to come back.

Nostalgia can be a dangerous thing, but there's a joke, isn't it? Nostalgia is not what it used to be, and it's easy to look back and think that things were wonderful, but they weren't. But seeing we've lost some things and it's interesting to be part of a heritage group and meet other heritage groups that are fighting to bring those feelings back.



## A carving knife

*Hugh Waterhouse*

Forged from crucible steel (probably made from Swedish iron)

Forged, ground, and hafted in the works of Joseph Rodgers and sons.

Exported to Canada.

Handed down in the place family in rural Quebec and Montreal

Brought back to Sheffield 40 years ago by an Anglo-Canadian family who continue to sharpen it.



*Hugh Waterhouse*

## Too much steel

*Hugh Waterhouse*

Behind this wall a street. Children playing.

Too much steel...



## In the field

*James Thompson*

I was studying archaeology at the University of Sheffield. And then I was looking for kind of a bit of experience in the way that people work professionally, and at that time, they had their own archaeological firm called Arcs. And I just went up there and I asked, “do you have any voluntary work?”

So, I started sorting through old archives that they’ve got the records from the work they’ve been doing, which they hadn’t yet got into the public archive. So, sorting out photos and putting them in order, and exploring the history of buildings through the records and trying to see those photos, working out where they had stood to take them so I could record that and make sure the records were correct.

But then as I got through that, the opportunities came up to get a bit of paid work and actually start doing the recording myself. And the first site that I did was Foyle Street in Sheffield, which is just off Sheffield Moor roundabout, and it’s now student flats. But then it was very rundown, derelict empty industrial works. And the particular works, which I think it’s called the Titanic works, was there, I went there with someone called Steve Duckworth who was an experienced buildings archaeologist, and I went in who was training me, essentially on the job. I remember him picking me up in his car and taking me there and going down these streets, which seeing these buildings and parts of Sheffield I had never seen before, the sort of historic Sheffield. It felt like it was very much fly steel, and looked like Victorian buildings on Victorian streets.

And we would meet up outside. I remember we went in, and he taught me that when you go into these places, they're rundown, and they've been rundown for a while, you can get squatters in them and things like that. So, we'd go into them, and we would shout out, "We're coming in if anyone's in here, we're just coming in to look around the old building", and there were signs. There were signs of people having recently been in there living rough.

And that was the first impression... of how derelict these places were, and how they were still being used by the dark corners of society where people were desperate. And so, once you kind of got through that, and then you were exploring the building. The experience you have is very much kind of you start to walk around constructing this mind map about where you are around the building, where what connects to what? Like, being very observant because that's the name of the job is like going and recording. You go around, you look at the details, and you look at what's been cast away, and I remember big boxes of stuff that the people who had previously used the building must have started packing stuff away and then just decided they'd abandoned those boxes. And they were filled with things like cigar boxes and bits of random documents from the operation of the works and stationery and all sorts of random stuff that you see through, and look see if there's anything there that you think's got immediate cultural interest or tells the story and try and capture some of that the lives of the people that have left.

And then we are into the detail of drawing plans, trying to unpick the way the buildings developed in time. We would walk around, look at the type of windows. Look at the type of industrial processes that might have been going on in there, look at the type of door frames and try to build up the chronology of how the buildings built and been lived in. So,

we had that you can't detach the people from the building because the whole archaeology is the study of people left behind and you're trying to unpick the social story.

So, as much as you can, you try to tell something about that. Although it can be very difficult because you're looking into somewhere where it's been stripped out of anything that's really of value, the things that people value. You are looking through the detritus. Stuff that was deemed not to be worth taking. I have very prominent memories of that place because it was the first one that I've gone into and very much the same experiences ever since. I always end up with these strong, strange memories, like, the memory of going in and shouting. I remember banging my head on a low beam. We couldn't get direct access between two rooms other than a hole. Someone had knocked on a wall and remembered climbing through that. Because these places had grown up in a very weird way, partly abandoned as the businesses retreated out, going into cellars, and finding, like, the old ash pits of furnaces that... I had two very strong memories of that.

One was that it is desperately cold when we're recording it. And we had masses of layers on being able to walk around this place and push, like we have these stripy rods, which are in 50-centimetre gradients for putting in photos for scale. And I remember that we would always test the floors of places we'd go into because they were rotten, and in this place, you could push the thing right the way through the floor. Underneath, you could see through one of the holes. You could see wallpaper on the cellar walls down there. And it was just and at that point, you realized that we weren't just in an industrial work. We were in an old back-to-back house that had been taken over by the industry, and elements of those people's lives were still in there, of the very early history of the 1850s, perhaps 1820s, where these places were being built.

And it was so cold we went and bought a coffee from a nearby coffee shop, but for whatever reason, it just tasted like wet, smelt like wet cat. And it couldn't work out why and I've got a very strong memory now of this. Like we still we just held it in the end. We couldn't drink hot coffees, but we just held them because it was so cold. But yeah, that was a very interesting experience.

And this is just looking, stepping back from the details and talking about a general experience of walking around the buildings, and being hands-on with the history of the industrial past which felt very recent at that point. It is now much harder to find that kind of... it has very much been cleaned up, the image of it. You couldn't but realise when you walk around these places that they weren't... they were in a state because they've been abandoned, but they were also in a state because they were heavily used and had hard and hard lives, and the people in them weren't worried about the cosmetics. They were just functional spaces. There were always these nice architectural frontages on these, on the offices, but behind the scenes, it was rough. Things have been added over time and knocked through. And the spaces have been altered to adapt to the changing technologies, and dome houses have been knocked through to expand works.

So, these weird experiences of looking up an old back-to-back staircase really cramped onto a huge... like an industrial workshop floor. And the very weird combinations. But that was it. Those places were not tidy. And I always feel that when we walk around places, they're very much sanitised. That's the... gentrification is the popular word, isn't it? But it's very much that way. You don't have the muck in the corners, the griminess. The authenticity has almost been squeezed out. I'll probably return when these buildings start to decline again perhaps. But it will never quite be the same.

I always have this... when you spend so much time looking at the past, you always have these two parts: on one side, you really love seeing these original spaces. And you want to see them kept and preserved, and they do get prepped and preserved, but you do get a sense of loss. That something is left behind or lost forever.

## Why would they bother?

*Joyce Bullivant*

I was doing some research into a place called Jordanthorpe, and I published it on a blog.

A woman emailed me and said: "I didn't know anything about it and I'm from Jordanthorpe". This made me feel so important. I sort of felt... Yes, I can do something there!

History is important to ordinary people. It does tend to be a certain snobbery about the heritage of ordinary people. You know, you get all these beautiful palaces and what have you, but sort of a working-class house?

Generally, where ordinary people have lived, that's not important.

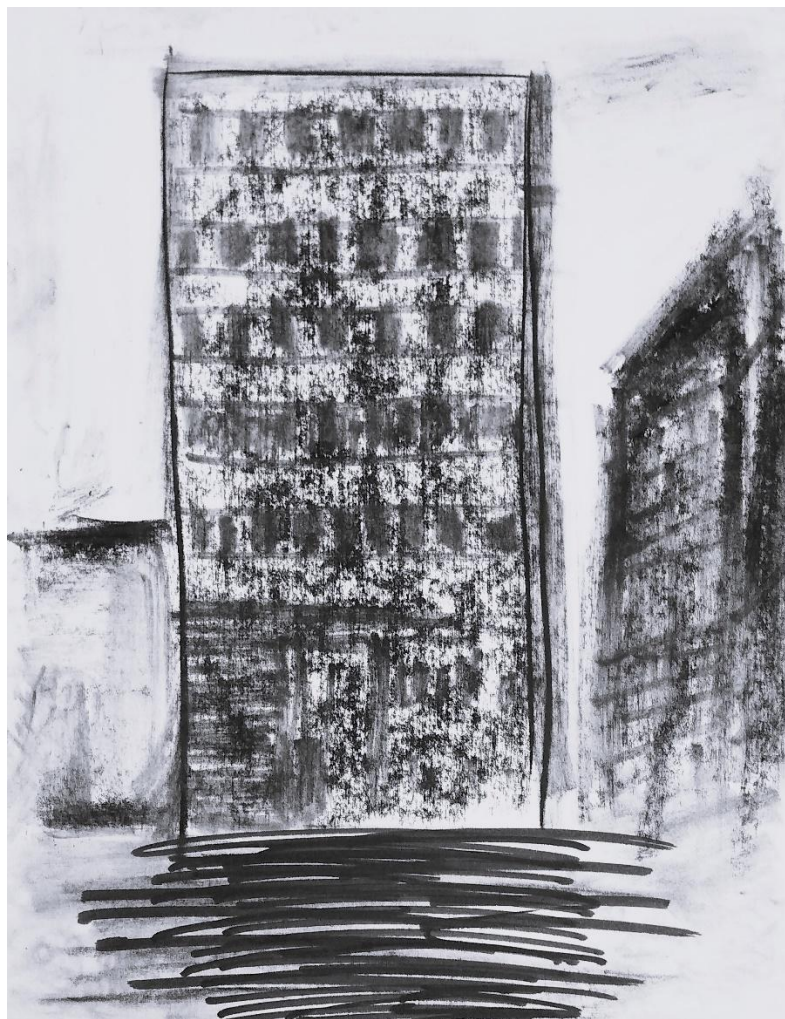
And I feel... Why do people spend so much money researching history if they didn't think it was important?

Why would they bother?



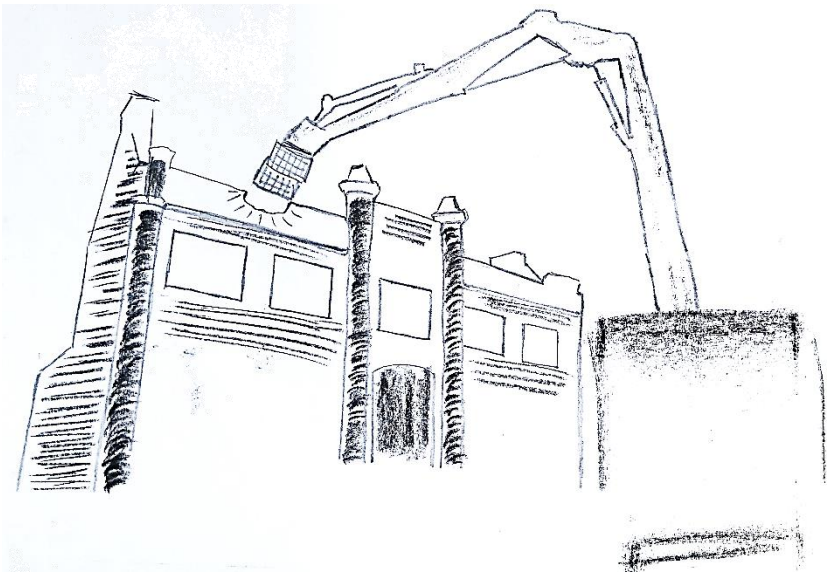
## Sheffield building formerly loved

*Laura Eddey*



# Progress

*Anonymous*



*Anonymous*

## Neepsend Chinese chequered history

*Jude Warrender*

Shalesmoor workshop hammers pound  
Night and day and all year round  
Shifts of fourteen hours or worse,  
Bent before the grinder's horse.

Fathers old before their time.  
Faces lined with grease and grime.  
Young lads follow in their tread  
Earn their keep before they're dead.

Streets now sleek with ash grey blocks,  
Where once the men in ragged smocks  
Were ruled by bosses' ticking clocks  
Piece work. Tick tick tick - tick tock...

No more the corner workers' pubs  
Sitting after work in 'snugs',  
Mirrored windows blanked with steam

A snatch of time to think or dream.

Take a beer, then home to hovels  
Slammed up quick with picks and shovels,  
Bread and dripping, off to bed,  
Children's feet touch parents' heads.

Now – see units piled up high  
Chairs and tables from Ikea;  
Chinese students surf WIFI.  
Their futures lie more in ideas.

Make their way up Hoyle Street hill  
Uni lectures beckon still.  
Now no trace of grime and dust -  
A Progress March, as march it must.

What would those former grinders feel,  
These Sheffield men of iron and steel  
To see their streets now polished clean,  
Replace their slums so tight and mean?

If they could now fast forward track  
And see their world turned front to back.  
No strength or sweat to earn one's bread  
No work with hands, just eyes and head.

I write this and I vainly think  
What another hundred years might bring?  
I cannot guess - nor see that time.  
... someone else must pen that rhyme.

## Sad day

*Jude Warrender*

Besmirched his face, - well, very nearly,  
Howard Street mural, Harry Brearley.  
I miss him there, his thoughtful face.  
He deserves a special place.

Wiped out for good, how sad that day,  
I really wish he could have stayed.  
Most of him was still OK,  
They could have touched him up some way.

Airbrushed from history... and the wall!  
To be honest, I'm appalled  
To see his portrait painted out  
And another mural there to flout...

... this man of stainless-steel invention  
His hometown needs some special mention.  
So, someone, please, do sculpt or paint,  
And do something for my complaint.



*Jude Warrender,*

## Job Stone

*Mary Groover*

This is the story of the first stonemason whose life I was able to explore.

He was surprisingly called Job Stone.

I looked at the insurance records of all the stonemasons from about 1832 to 1920 that are held by Warwick University, and he doesn't figure there.

In one way, his life is very like these stonemasons.

They nearly all died before they were 42 because they had dust on their lungs. They died of tuberculosis and of all sorts of lung related diseases.

Job Stone is not on that record because he was a Master Mason, and he didn't qualify to be a member of the operative Stone Mason's Guild. As Master Mason he was more successful than most. Of course, he employed various people, and he went into being a merchant on his own... He owned properties. He let out. So, he was successful by any standard.

He lived just behind our church, and he had a wife and two sons, and he was involved in certain sort of well-publicised projects in the newspaper, as an orphanage up in Crookes, for example.

Despite his success, he died like so many other masons when he was 40 to 43 in his early 40s leaving behind a widow and two sons.



You would think that a man who just some extent made it would be able to provide for them, but he hadn't been able to. Actually, when he died, his widow and two sons went to the workhouse. She got a job in the workhouse and the two sons... they lived in the workhouse.

# Pride

*Nick Duggan*

One early memory was a school trip to Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, one of the few remaining places where crucible furnaces exist.

In those days, we were allowed to climb behind a protective fence, and we're able to handle the objects where basically people who are known as teamers used to pull up a red-hot crucible from a fiery pit, and then pour metal into moulds.

That left a lasting impression on me. The notion of Sheffield being synonymous with steel (world famous!) resonates deeply.

The emotion that comes through for me is pride, as the city I live in is associated almost with a single production process. It's not so much about a single product, but that whole notion of Sheffield being the same.

And the fact that steel carries on, to Sheffield being and having great sort of technological advancement to make lots of sophisticated components for formula one cars, for airplanes. So, yes, we can still have that pride in the city.

# Streetlights?

*Robin Hughes*

When I was growing up, the streetlights were electric streetlights. I was not quite old enough to remember when Sheffield was lit by gas, even though in my very early years that process was still going on. There were a few streetlights still gas powered dotted around the city. Not in any kind of obvious or consistent pattern, but it was always lovely to encounter one of these.

I didn't really know where they were and not that many were close to where I lived. Every so often you happen to go off the usually beaten track and you'd find it a gas lamp, and sometimes it would still actually be lit, and I never really understood why this was until much more recently.

My late father spent quite a lot of time in the Royal Hallamshire Hospital. He had a series of illnesses before he died in his late 80s around 10-12 years ago. Car parking at Hallamshire is not easy, but I found that I could park fairly conveniently on Park Lane, which is just a little bit further down the hill from the hospital, and I parked close to one of these lamps.

It's no longer lit by gas, but it was recognised the same sort. I've never got up close and looked at one carefully and I thought "I'm constantly passing here..." so, I took a bit of notice and I read it.

It said on the base "GE Web SO Gas Destructor".

"Why were these things still here?" It wasn't that they've forgotten, but they had survived from an earlier era.

Until the 60s and even the 70s, when I first remember noticing them, they were still doing a useful job because they weren't streetlights. They were there to burn off the gas from the sewers in Sheffield and to make it safe.

It came from another age, when sewer gas was really seen as absolute terror, something that spread disease and had to be avoided. In fact, the gas itself is dangerous because it can be explosive, but actually it's not unhealthy in itself. It's the organisms, but they date from a time when the German theory of infections was not well understood or accepted.

So I started searching a bit more, realising they were there because they were useful rather than because somebody was sentimental about them. And actually, that peculiarly as well suited to Sheffield.

Sheffield, in fact, installed more of these lamps than anywhere else on the planet and they were installed worldwide. Consulting the records and the archives as I did eventually, I realised that the city had probably installed 82, and 25 that survived today.

This is a memory from maybe 30-40 years earlier and then of course, it was brought to me by the fact that my dad was sick and some time not very long after that he was going to die.

All these things came together and they all kind of belong to this narrative.

## **Never static. It flows.**

*Rhonda Allen*

When I moved to Sheffield, a friend of mine introduced me to a photographer called Leroy Wenham. He has documented Carnivals in Leeds, Sheffield, and in other cities across the UK. He was a person that was instrumental in bringing Carnival to Sheffield.

And I thought “Wow... Sheffield, Carnival. This sounds interesting!”

In 2019, thereabouts, he asked if I wanted to wear a costume for the Carnival.

I was “Yeah, that sounds interesting!”

The costume that they had chosen for me was to follow the King costume, which was the *Rise of the Phoenix*. It was beautiful, yellow and orange, a fantastic costume made out of foam, no feathers, no beads.

And I was “Yeah, I want to be part of this!”

Because carnival is never static. It flows.

## Industrial roots

*Richard Bramall*

I was born in 1949 in Stannington, which is a village on the west side of Sheffield, now a suburb of Sheffield. As a child I lived on a place called Cliffe Road, near a big ganister quarry.

At 7:30 in the morning, the grinding mills would start grinding away and, in the afternoons, they blast away the rock for the next day.

My father was a refractory clay hand moulder. He'd get up at seven in the morning, walk to work down in the Loxley Valley, which smelled of sulphur from all the three brickworks, a smell quite acute of the burning fire for the refractory bricks.

My grandfather was a blacksmith at Dyson's brickworks, and he was on the work up to 1935.

I worked in one of the refractory works in Stannington for Dysons. And then later worked for a Sheffield company called GR-Stein Refractories.

So, I've been in history.

# The coal mine

*Rita Schmidt*

My father, Janek Schmidt, worked at the local coal mine, which was called Pleasley Pit, just a few miles from our home, Shirebrook. And over the last ten years or so, it has become a national heritage and a museum. And it's very poignant, really. I go and visit it quite a lot now because my dad actually died down the coal mine, he had a heart attack underground in the coal mine.

I remember being taken there as a child sometimes when he went to collect his wages, and I had to wait in the canteen, and he'd buy me a cake. While I waited for him...

When all the coal mines closed down, gradually in the 80s, 70s and 80s, it was just becoming quite derelict, but somehow, they've managed to get lots of heritage grants and things, and it's a superb museum now.

When my mom died, about ten years ago, we asked the Pleasley Pit guardians if we could visit, and we took her funeral cortege to the pit.

So, we visited with all the funeral cortege and all the guests and put a wreath for mom and dad together.

That's not a sad thing, really, it was a good thing.

And they were really pleased to be using the pit and the museum as an opening for other community ideas. So, we visit there quite regularly and now we're good friends with the guardians of the pit.

It was a very hard job. And especially with my dad, he'd come from Poland just after the war. And before the war, he was a lumberjack and a farmer in the forests in Poland, a lovely open-air life.

At 17, he was conscripted into the German Army. He then escaped as a POW, and joined up with the British forces, the Polish Second Corps, I'd say, in Italy and was sent to England. Then he was stationed at a resettlement camp in the grounds of Hardwick Hall, met my mom and all locals and started working at Pleasley Pit.

He was in a foreign country. And you know, there's still quite an attitude with some people about refugees today coming, "taking our jobs". I was a young child, so I didn't ever hear him saying that that was a problem. But I did talk to an old man at the Pit a few years ago, he died now, who worked with my dad, and he said he was such a hard worker that he had no enemies. He was a hard worker, and he was very well accepted. And I think there were quite a few Polish miners. They earned their respect by hard work. But also, when he was offered promotion, He turned it down several times. He said, for him. He said it wasn't right for him to tell another man in his own country what he should be doing.

We've got a lot of memories of that area, the whole area, but it's strange to visit the pit now... They have an open day and fundraising and they do guided tours. And I can stand there and remember being a child having a custard pie in the canteen while I was waiting for dad. Watching it, watching it just get more and more derelict.

And then it blossomed into this fabulous museum. And then it's also associated with Mom's funeral. And now it has become a happy place, really.



I just hope that they keep retelling the stories of how bad it was to work down the mine. My father and my brother worked in the same mine, and they would tell you it was great camaraderie, and although it was under incredibly hard conditions and very, very dangerous. They would all tell you they'd go back to work tomorrow. Because it was about the camaraderie, a bit like being in the army with your soldiers, you all relied on each other. You had to trust your workmates for safety.

## Excavating memories

*Sally Rodgers*

One of the reasons that I came to Sheffield, and I stayed was because my mum was born here, and my grandma lived here when I came to be a student.

She was in her late 80s or early 90s when I first moved, and she lived in Sheffield for most of her life. Her mum had a hat shop in Sharrow, before and then during the war it got bombed out in Sheffield Blitz.

She had a really strong connection to Sheffield and through her, I do.

At Heeley City Farm, we did several excavations as it is built on several streets of industrial housing, so slum housing.

We dig up the houses and with lots of people, children, everybody came to join in.

And the very first year we did that, we dug up the number 57 Alexandra Road. And while we were doing that, a lady that had lived there as a little girl who was then in their eighties came and we got her back to the doorstep of the house.

We took a photo of her sitting on her back doorstep that she hadn't seen since she was a little girl.

My grandma and her friend, also in a late 80's or early 90s, came to have a look at the excavation, and I remember very recently sitting leaning on a fence with all these old ladies looking in this excavation that we dug up, we were excavating the standards of this house.

I had a session with these ladies about the Blitz in Sheffield, and by looking at our excavation, it prompted them to tell me all sorts of stories about how they'd sheltered from bombs in the cellars of their houses, and what it looked like and what the shelter of their best friends looked like.

And I felt a very strong, personal, and very visceral connection to Sheffield's history.

# Riots

*Shelan Holden*<sup>1</sup>

I can't remember when I woke up, or if I even slept

It was cold, foggy much like all November nights in Yorkshire

The fire was usually crackling itself awake by the time I woke  
up to go to school, breakfast ready, homework undone  
or rushed

This morning was different – all night I had heard vans  
arriving, shouts, dogs barking, horses coming out of  
their horse boxes

It was the getting ready for something I didn't know was  
about to happen.

Now I know it had been happening all night, slowly and  
violently making its way towards our houses.

The sound of horse's hooves on concrete, dogs barking, neb  
shouting, the feeling of a tension and excitement.

Peering out of the window afraid of the number of police, the  
vans, a voice on a megaphone eerily cutting through  
the darkness and the fog

Get the bastards

A distant roar all night, coming closer and closer.

---

<sup>1</sup> "For context, I lived in a row of 10 houses in south Yorkshire mining village, in what were the old managers cottages. This meant we lived 'in the pit yard', so we were behind the picket line. This meant that the 10 families in those houses had a unique experience, and the riots were much larger and increasingly violent from November 1984." (Shelan Holden)

Feeling scared, confused

It was cold – the fire had gone out

The noise of the thud, thud thud of a hundred riot shields

The roar and the violence now at the top of my street, so  
close.

Dad? What is happening, what will they do?

Sssshhh. Come away from the window.

The noise of violence is so close, the screams of a man being  
beaten in a black maria outside my front door Get off  
me! Stop! Scream!

I wonder, what if my little brother knows that poor man's  
child at school? How can he say I heard your daddy's  
screams this morning.

through the icy fog, figures fuzzy and threatening

dad, what if they get to our house? Dad, why is this  
happening?

I am 14, I am cold, the fire is just being lit. its dawn, its foggy  
but I can see

Blood on the horses, I cry

Blood on the police, hate

Blood on the floor, I don't know whose

Dad? What happened?

# Home

*Terezia Rostas*

The connection with Sheffield is maybe the reason why I'm still here. What is it that holds me back and what is it that actually makes me feel that Sheffield it's my home too.

There is a visual flashback that is maybe linked to some of my childhood dreams where I grew up as place where I've chosen to live has a really similar view to the one to the place where I grew up.

What does that mean?

Somehow it brought me that comfort of finding a place and choosing to live in a place that is familiar to me, that brings my childhood memories back.

Not just the house, but also the park surrounding the area, the hills, the Manor Lodge Farm, and the whole, I would say, Manor Park area.

And to me, even though that place I was told is mainly white British, there was something that I still felt connected strongly with.

First was the hill. The cemetery as well, the City Road Cemetery. We have a strong connection with the cemetery in our community in our culture. And so, the cemetery kind of made me feel it's a unique place. The farm, the Manor Lodge ruins.

Those were the places where I feel connected to the city.

On the other side, is the people and the friendship that we managed to grow and look after and care after each other.

When you close your eyes, and you think “what do you leave behind here?”

All these images are coming in your mind with the people that you see every day, with the places where you go every day.

And I think that's what kind of makes you feel that it's home.



*"Crafting the Past"* amplifies the diverse voices of Sheffield, sharing memories, stories, and reflections on the city's industrial past and cultural heritage. Through creative writing and visual narratives, this anthology offers a unique and intimate perspective on how the past has shaped the lives of individuals and communities, inviting readers to discover the power of storytelling in preserving and celebrating Sheffield's rich and complex history and heritage.

